SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

19

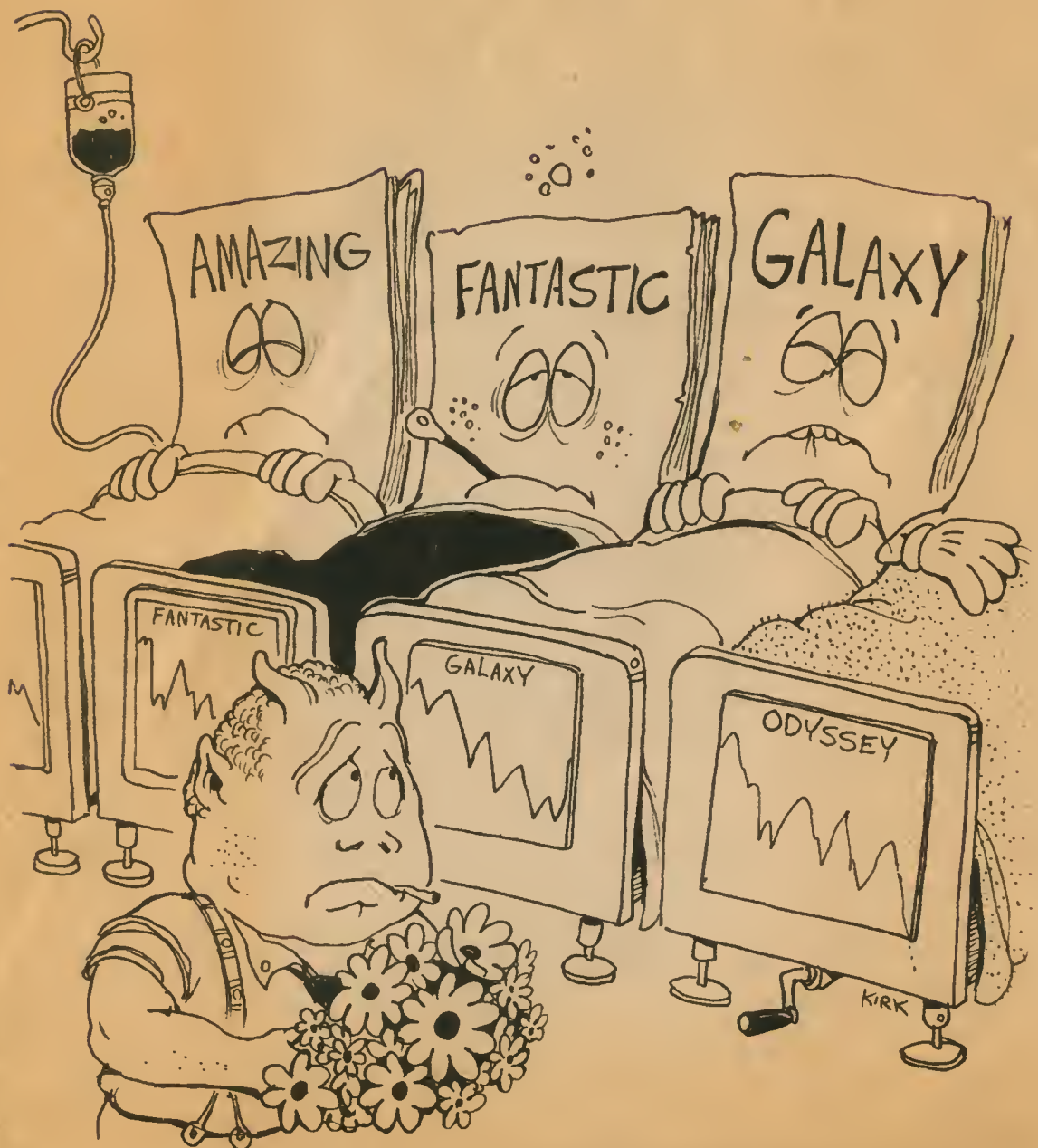
$1.25

SFR INTERVIEWS

Philip K. Dick

●

kelly freas



ALIEN THOUGHTS

BY THE EDITOR

The following 'diary' format for SFR is a change I've been tinkering with in the back of my head (far away from Alter's lair) for about a year.

A combination of the usual "Alien Thoughts" elements in dated form, in extensia and extremis. How much of it can the readers want? This seems to be the ultimate domination of the zine by the editor and will probably quiet those who continually cry for 'more Geis'.

The advantages are obvious: I don't have to buy as much outside material and I can indulge myself shamelessly. The disadvantages are the rigors of reading and reviewing a great deal more, and the danger and the likelihood of making a damn fool of myself---more exposure, more risk. But I hereby stipulate to the court of public opinion that I am now and always have been a member of the Damn Fool party, so I am therefore freed to be a damn fool when the inevitable impulse takes me and my better judgement is off somewhere weeding the garden.

Let the fun begin.

●

7-19-76 My birthday. Don't ask. Times Litho delivered SFR 18 this morning, surprisingly quick service even for them. Less than a week. I had 5800 copies printed, up from 5500, to keep abreast of new subs and the slow increase in bookstore sales. I retain about 2300 copies in reserve for back issue sales in future years.

I just had #9 reprinted--3000 copies---and soon will have to have #10 and #14 reprinted, too. All the mimeographed issues will follow in the next six months or so, as they are exhausted. I can see the SFR bank account melting away....

News that the postal unions, to protest the deficit-imposed cut-back in postal services and schedules, are going to stop the mails soon. That has got to be grotesque: that's like "We had to destroy the village in order to save it." Classic line.

I fell instantly in love with the new look of SFR 18---the appearance of this IBM Delegate typeface at 12 spaces per inch. The other typefaces worked beautifully in the SFR format and functions. I will reduce the print just a bit more in #19, I think. To a 36 space line in these columns, from a 34 space line in #18. This will add maybe 100 more words per page...maybe 5000 words per issue. I suppose Alter will claim them.

"Damn right, Geis! I could use ten pages all for myself. I could--"

All right! STAY in your pages. keep your goddamned voice out of my new diary pages.

7-30-76 Made my Friday self-imposed deadline and got the subscription-complimentary-trade copies to the post office in labeled sacks, all in order, nice, nice, for the second class mailing. All that zip sorting and packaging and sacking and labeling drives me up the wall, and each time I get halfway through the process I interupt the labor to desperately figure simpler alternatives (Second Class Transient...even First Class...Book Rate) but I always conclude the savings in postage---on the order of $150. per mailing---is worth the mind-scrambling detail. But, oh, those damned weird zones, those zip-code oddities, those sacking requirements....

✡

Jimmy Carter, our next President, is coming on as one smart, tough, relentless, admirable Liberal. His choice of advisors in foreign affairs and economics signals his coming solutions---"solutions"---to national problems. He probably fancies himself a new Roosevelt.

Carter speaks with forked smile.

The economy is slowing down now, and the upcoming July unemployment figures ought to be interesting. Any kind of uptick will go a long way to sinking Ford. He's been taking the credit for the improving economy and that has been the backbone of his contention that he is electable in November. With the economy faltering he will be seen as very much un-electable, and this may give Reagan the talking point he needs to get the nomination.

●

7-31-76 Went through my accounts receivable for the bookstores this morning and found about twenty stores way behind in paying. Pulled those who were still owing for SFR 14-15-16 and send them a nicely phrased form letter saying in effect you-got-ta-pay-before-I-send-the-latest-issue.

I suspect most of them will shrug, throw the letter away and forget to pay the past due invoices.

Sad but true that not more than a small percentage of bookstores are willing to carry a small-press zine. Too much trouble. And of course an SFR-type zine is a special interest item with inherently limited sales potential (except in the growing number of science fiction and fantasy bookstores who sell quite a few).

Sometimes I think I should have started a zine called EROTIC VIEWPOINTS: pics, letters, opinion, fiction. I'd be rich.

●

8-3-76 Boxed and Jiffy-bagged all the bookstore orders and got them off. Took two days. Every issue I pick up two or three new bookstores, and drop two or three.

****

THE HADONIST

FLIGHT TO OPAR
By Philip Jose Farmer
DAW UW1238, $1.50

Reviewed by REG

Book two in the saga of Hadon of Opar, the hero of the savage, Olympic-type games of the twin inland seas of central africa---12,000 years ago.

He should have been made king of the Khokarsan empire but was cheated by a usurper King and escaped imprisonment and death during a vast earthquake.

He has heeded the oracle's prediction that his lovely wife will give birth to a famous person if born in Opar. In flight with his small coterie he has adventures on the inland seas and in the strange, cities that live on the coasts. There is intrigue, death and convincing realism and utterly believable detail and background in this series. The vast struggle between the followers of mighty goddess Kho and the userper male god Resu is fascinating as it warps every life and is the crucible of history. I love it.

Farmer is so convincing that I really believe there was water covering what are now the Chad and Congo basins and that this was the cradle of the world's first great civilization.

The first book was HADON OF ANCIENT OPAR, DAW UW1241, $1.50.

****

8-4-76 Linda Bushyager's new KARRASS arrived and as usual I read it first off---an excellent fan-news and fan-opinion zine.

She reports that John Miesel will probably be introducing a motion at the business meeting of the Mid-American Con (the World SF convention this year, at Kansas City) to abolish the fan Hugo awards (Best Fan Writer, Best Fan Artist, Best Amateur Magazine) as no longer viable awards.

This is spoil-sport behavior if it comes off; these faans are pissed off that SFR, ALGOL and LOCUS have won the Best Amateur Magazine award for the last six or seven years. They think large circulations make for winners, and that the small circulation "truly amateur" zine has no chance to win.

They conveniently ignore the fact that no more than four or five hundred votes are ever cast for the

COVER BY TIM KIRK

ALIEN THOUGHTS.....2

AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP K. DICK
Conducted by Daniel DePrez.....6

IS THERE SCIENCE FICTION BEYOND THE BORDER?
By Bruce Robbins.....16

THE NOTEBOOKS OF MACK SIKES
By Larry Niven.....21

CELEBRATING THE WILD BLACK YONDER
By Wayne N. Keyser.....27

THE VIVISECTOR
A Column By Darrell Schweitzer.....28

PROZINE NOTES.....37

ANGEL FEAR: A Sort-of Review Column of SF Art
By Freff.....38

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK KELLY FREAS
Conducted by Freff.....42

SMALL PRESS NOTES.....46

SF NEWSLETTER FROM ITALY
By Gianni Montanari.....53

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT
By Alter & Geis.....53

ALIEN CONCLUSIONS.....55

LETTERS

J.T. MAJOR.....4
NEIL KVERN.....12
BILL GIBSON.....12
PIERS ANTHONY.....19
JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON.....20
HARRY WARNER.....20
LYNNE HOLDOM.....22
JACK DANN.....22
LEIGH BRACKETT.....23
JUDY-LYNN DEL REY.....23
K.W. JETER.....24
MICHAEL WARD.....24
DAN MILLER.....26
BARRY MALZBERG.....26
DAMON KNIGHT.....34
HARLAN ELLISON.....34
DARRELL SCHWEITZER.....35

THE ALIEN CRITIC
SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW
Available in microform from:
OXFORD MICROFORM PUBLICATIONS LTD.
Wheatsheaf Yard, Blue Boar Street,
Oxford OX1 4EY

INTERIOR ART

TIM KIRK 2, 3, Bacover
ALEXIS GILLILAND 5, 6, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 35, 37, 42, 48
MIKE GILBERT 7, 8, 12, 13, 20, 21, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34, 41, 47
BILL ROTSLER 36
FREFF 38

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

Formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC

P.O. Box 11408
Portland, OR
97211

REVIEWS

FLIGHT TO OPAR
Reviewed by REG.....2

HEALER
Reviewed by REG.....4

THE MAKING OF KING KONG
Reviewed by Buzz Dixon.....6

DEUS IRAE
Reviewed by REG.....19

LEGACY
SPACE TRAP
BIRTH OF FIRE
Reviewed by Lynne Holdom.....22

THE SHATTERED CHAIN
CHANGE
THE HORDE
Reviewed by Lynne Holdom.....23

MINDBRIDGE
Reviewed by REG.....24

FOR TEXAS AND ZED
Reviewed by REG.....25

THE CRAFT OF SCIENCE FICTION
UNIVERSE 6
THE FURUOLOGICAL CONGRESS
FUTURE POWER
MERVYN PEAKE WRITINGS & DRAWINGS
Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer....28

WHAT DOES WOMAN WANT?
Reviewed by Robert Anton Wilson...36

THE HAB THEORY
Reviewed by Ronald R. Lambert.....37

RUNES
TENSION, APPREHENSION & DISSENSION
WHO WAS THAT MONOLITH I SAW YOU WITH?
SOUTH OF THE MOON
THE ANNOTATED GUIDE TO ROBERT E. HOWARD'S SWORD & SORCERY
NEW LIBERTARIAN WEEKLY
THE ARSENE LEPINE - HERLOCK SOAMES AFFAIR
ALTERNATIVE AMERICA
PHANTASY DIGEST
TOADSTOOL WINE
APOLLO
MEDUSA: A PORTRAIT
FANTASTIC NUDES #2
THE BOOK OF VIRGIL FINLAY
GALILEO
Reviewed by REG.....46

HEALTH AND LIGHT
Reviewed by Elsie.....48

BRIDGE OF ASHES
THE STARCROSSED
Reviewed by REG.....48

AND STRANGE AT ECBATAN THE TREES
SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE
GATE OF IVREL
FIVE FOR INFINITY
KENNAQUHAIR
Reviewed by Alter-Ego.....53

AUGUST 1976

VOLUME FIVE, NUMBER THREE

WHOLE NUMBER EIGHTEEN

RICHARD E. GEIS
EDITOR & PUBLISHER

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY
February, May, August, November

Single Copy----$1.25

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UNITED STATES: $4.00 One Year
$7.00 Two Years

CANADA*: US$4.50 One Year
US$8.00 Two Years
**Canadians may pay with personal cheques if the chequing acct. number on their cheques is printed in computer numerals. (Thus we become slaves to the needs of the Machine.)*

UNITED KINGDOM:
Due to constant deterioration of the English pound, no current subscription rates can be set. Please query Wm. Dawsons & Sons, address below.

BACK ISSUES of TAC & SFR are available from: FANTAST (MEDWAY) LTD., 39 West St., Wisbech, Cambs., PE13 2LX

Agent: WM. DAWSON & SONS
Cannon House
Folkestone, Kent,
CT19 5EE

AUSTRALIA: $4.00 AUST. One Year
$6.00 AUST. Two Years
To Agent: SPACE AGE BOOKS
305-307 Swanston St.
Melbourne, 3000 Vic.

ALL OTHER FOREIGN AND STRANGE PLACES
US$4.50 One Year
US$8.00 Two Years
All foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollar cheques or money orders, except to agents.

COPYRIGHT © 1976 BY RICHARD E. GEIS. ALL RIGHTS ARE HEREBY ASSIGNED TO THE CONTRIBUTORS.

Science Fiction Review is published at 1525 NE Ainsworth, Portland, OR 97211.

NO ADVERTISING WILL BE ACCEPTED
Second Class Postage Paid at Portland, OR 97208

fan awards. All those thousands of mere sf readers who are in theory distorting the fan awards don't in actuality vote for those awards because they don't consider themselves qualified. A few may vote on the reputation of SFR, ALGOL or LOCUS, but I would imagine very few.

Linda feels the fan Hugos are 'no longer being voted on by knowledgeable fans.' Aha. Well, she has the recently instituted Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards for the True Believers of Fandom, but there is that dull aching sensation in many breasts that the FAAN Awards are consolation prizes. How much better if the fan Hugos could be abolished and the FAAN Awards the only ones left. And of course SFR, ALGOL, and LOCUS have been gerrymandered out of the FAAN Awards as too 'professional'. That is, too good and too successful.

Note that Linda actually SELLS her fanzine! NARASU is available by subscription: 3/$1.00. Her address is: 1614 Evans Av., Prospect Park, PA 19076.

Now, having sunk that harpoon, I feel better.

8-6-76 I am surprised that the unemployment figure is up several ticks to 7.8%. That must send shivers through the Ford camp. The increase is "explained" by claiming a lot more people entered the labor force--mostly women.

But consumer spending is slackening and consumer debt formation is receding to recession levels. New car sales are fading.

Something is happening, but you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?

We have enjoyed home-grown beans, strawberries, peas, kohlrabi (I think that's the way it's spelled) and corn on the cob. We've got seven loaded tomato plants in the backyard...and very soon now we'll be eating tomatoes like mad. No sign of any cantaloups yet, even though the vines are all over the fence and cover the ground under the corn stalks.

I have plans for expanding the garden next year.

8-8-76 Finished the review of HEALER by F. Paul Wilson which Karl Pflock asked me to do for LIBERTARIAN REVIEW, an admirable journal.

****

Briefly, HEALER is run-of-the-mill magic psience fiction with an interesting segment of libertarian philosophy embodied in the planet Tolive. Once again an immortal man (with an alien helper roosting in his brain) saves all humanity and also the galaxy from a fate worse than death. The formula is, for me, getting extremely tiresome. (Doubleday, $5.95.)

****

8-11-76 It occurs to me that while landing the Viking on Mars was an admirable technical feat (which the American people have come to take for granted) finding life on Mars is the prime need; if there is life in the solar system except for Earth, it will help to keep the space program alive. If Mars is sterile, too, then what's the point in looking further? The romance is dead.

Now, if they found diamonds big as fists on the Martian surface...if vast pools of underground oil were discovered in the Moon...Greed will motivate more people and governments than will an alien microbe.

The SFR ads in ANALOG don't seem to be pulling very well. I'm aware I had to contend with that other SF REVIEW (monthly) from San Diego whose ads in ANALOG ran three months (overlapping mine for two months), and that Andy Porter put an ad for ALGOL in a recent issue of ANALOG, so that the impact of my SFR ads has been diluted, but, still, all those readers should respond more than they have. The ads in GALAXY do better, even though most times the new subscribers don't give a clue where they're coming from.

(Is that San Diego SF REVIEW actually publishing issues, by the way?)

I have ads scheduled in ANALOG through the December issue, and hopefully they will draw better as their impact accumulates over the months. You have to hit readers on the head time after time after time to get their attention and give them that impulse to overcome inertia and write a check, address an envelope, write a short subscription note...

There is a strong feeling in me that I should very soon stop trying to hype subscriptions into the 2000-plus area. The time required to service the existing lists is really more than I'd like, and the same goes for trying to dramatically expand bookstore sales. A little lazy voice (not Alter) whispers: "Toast, Dickie. Sail along with 2000 subs and 1300 bookstore sales...Be content with a few hundred dollars to live on a month...don't try to jack it up to $500 or more...Life is too short, enjoy...enjoy...read more...more... more..."

I nod. I drift out to the back yard to work on the gardens...get ideas for more flowers...more efficient use of land...I work on the storm windows...peek under the leaves at the lengthening, fattening cucumbers...eye the new strawberries... *yawn* Let's see now...I'll read one of the Aspen Press books which arrived a few days ago...

****

LETTER FROM J.T. MAJOR

August 16, 1976

'Enclosed is a COA. I don't want it printed in the magazine, for reasons that will soon be obvious. Also enclosed is a copy of a manuscript. The original has been destroyed, by me, for two obvious reasons. The publication of the enclosed will set several persons and groups off after me, the least of which is Philip Jose Farmer. And they won't all be as nice as him! I think you will also understand why I can't reveal how, or when, or where I obtained the original.'

THE MANUSCRIPT

'There was an event at the coup at "Zangaro" [I am using the names given in the fictionalized versions in order to protect my safety.) that I had not known the full significance of until just recently. The book TARZAN ALIVE by Philip Jose Farmer had a familiar air. I, too, am the real person upon whom a semi-fictionalized story is based. Specifically, I am "Cat Shannon" of Fredrick Forsyth's THE DOGS OF WAR. (As you may see, the report of my suicide was a contrivance arranged between ourselves. I had---and have---reasons for being thought dead.) The other thing connected with Mr. Farmer's biography is that its title is no longer true. Specifically, "Tarzan" is no longer alive. I killed him.

'The events of the killing are as follows: The setting of the attack upon the Presidential Palace of "Zangaro" given in the book is close to the reality. Close enough, anyway, that I can refer to it. I was standing in the courtyard of the Palace when I heard a tremendous human cry. I swung around and saw in one of the ground floor doorways the one the Ibo "Johnny" had gone through---a white man. The first impression I had of him was that he was tall and muscular. However, he did not look quite human. He gave the cry and rushed at me. However, I was able to bring up my MP 40-(Schmeisser) and shoot him twice in the chest.

'At seven that morning, "Dr. Okoye" said that he was interested in seeing the corpse. He identified it as that of---I suppose the only way to say it is as of "Lord Greystoke." Since it was an entirely different name, I did not understand its significance. Since we did not want to have it reported that an English nobleman had been killed during the coup, for reasons of security, and since we mercenaries all wished to disappear, the body was buried as that of "Vlaminck"

'Some statistics might be in order.

'Height: 6'4"

'Weight: 240 lb. (approximately; it is rather hard to weigh a corpse)

'Hair: Black.

'Colour of eyes: Grey.

'Build: Extremely muscular (It would appear that he killed "Johnny" by breaking his neck.)

'Identifying marks: Many scars (They were all over him. One l

am sure will be of particular interest was one that started over the left eye and ran to the right to the hairline on to the right ear.)

'On the suggestion from my friend who is sending out this manuscript to who he says are the right people, I should like to say that as far as I know, I am not related to any of the so-called "Wold Newton" family.'

END MANUSCRIPT

'The least of the conclusions that can be drawn from this is that the letter to Farmer from "Lord Greystoke" in MOTHER WAS A LOVELY BEAST is probably a forgery. I fear we must renounce our fond memories and dreams for "Lord Greystoke", "John Gribardson" and so on.'

((I hardly know what to say. The legitimacy of the "manuscript" above is now obviously beyond verification. I have published this letter and ms. in the interests of possible truth. The ramifications are breathtaking--if this account is true.))

****

8-12-76 Had 500 Presto Logs delivered this afternoon. This is about three years' fuel supply for the stove. $112.00 cost. A bargain, I think.

Yesterday I built the frames for the storm windows for the big front windows, gave them the undercoat and the Birch White overcoat. This morning I stapled on the heavy clear plastic I had bought for the purpose. Need some 1/2" wood stripping to better, more securely hold the plastic to the frames.

Couple nights ago something, probably a possum, gnawed at two of our cabbages. We pulled those cabbages, cut away the gnawed part and will somewhat prematurely have cabbage for dinners this and mayhap next week. Our one huge head of cabbage is untouched.

The everbearing strawberries are giving a second crop. Delicious with my wheat germ in the morning and especially scrumptious with a slab of ice cream (which I cannot do without for long). I am treading on the edge of my (self-image) permissible weight--177-178 pounds.

Started my second gallon of homemade wine yesterday, too. We have only one waterlock (for the fermentation process) but have a dozen on order at Sears. Should be able to start a cycle of beginning one gallon every ten days or so while drinking a gallon during the same period--while eight or ten gallons are in the three month fermentation aging pipeline. The stuff comes out about 8% alcohol, and costs about $1.50 per gallon. It has a tangy, slightly sweet taste.

8-13-76 Raining today. Strange non-summer we're having. I caused this rain, of course--I thoroughly watered the gardens last night.

That was an interesting series of psi phenomena reports on NBC news a few weeks ago. That NBC put its 'stamp of approval' on psi-talents (telepathy, precognition--the ones I happened to see) is almost mind-boggling. Now it is permissible to think psi is a real area for study, and exists and like that. Now psi-phenomena have been legitimized.

I have received two clips of articles sent by SFR readers (thanks again) dealing with the mind-out-of-body experiences of people who have "died" and been revived. The experience is one of looking down at one's body after death and viewing the actions and hearing the words of people at the scene. Later, when revived, these once-dead people astound the witnesses by giving word-for-word and action-for-action reports of events when they were technically dead. This phenomena has been reported time and again all through history and in every part of the world.

These once-dead people also report seeing dead relatives and friends coming for them, to welcome them to the spirit world, to heaven ...call it what you will. These once-dead people never fear death again.

That's a comforting belief. The experience can be "explained" by saying that the brain does not die instantly, of course, and continues to hear and possibly see, but that the perceptions are experienced by the dying mind (a natural process, perhaps due to oxygen starvation of certain areas of the brain) as out-of-body hallucinations.

I have read of this out-of-body experience before--having to do with prisoners in extended solitary confinement, who have learned to practice this astral projection of their awareness/mind. Some mystics have written of it, and some occultists. Apparently one doesn't have to have "died" or died to experience it. They write of the danger of going too far from the body, for too long. If their 'lifeline' to their body is broken they really do die.

What we need is a double-blind laboratory controlled experiment in this astral projection technique. And more work on the psi talents--to incontrovertibly verify them, once and for all.

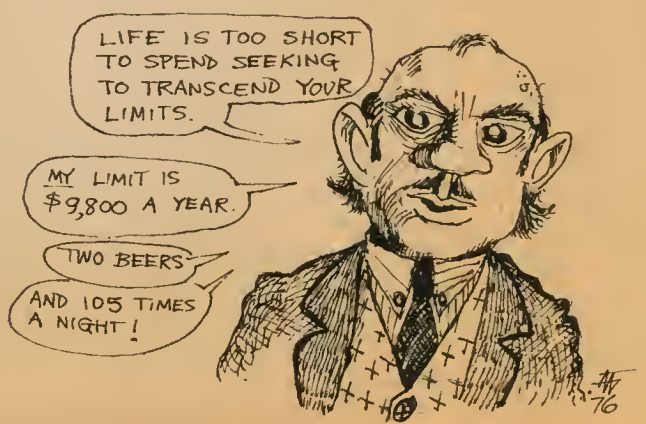
Could be that once psi is accepted and respectable, everyone will suddenly develop some of these powers. Social inhibition is a powerful force.

Of course, there are a huge number of intensely neurotic and marginally psychotic people around who have seized on the occult and the psi phenomena for their own warped emotional needs. They will always be a problem for the image of psi and the true paranormal researchers. And it may be that a significant percentage of the insane and 'disturbed' are psi-talented--because they have broken loose from the social blinkers that restrict most "normal" people, and are free to let their minds go in any direction. How embarrassing.

This will be an interesting field to watch.

Relevant quote from page 22 of THE HEALING MIND:

> "When all things are considered, the war against humanity's ancient enemy, infectious disease, is going badly for our side. Faithful above all to the law of cause and effect, the medical researchers applied Koch's postulates from bacteriology and gained some spectacular victories. Smallpox has been eliminated from the Western hemisphere, polio and tuberculosis have been beaten back, to name just three. However, in the area of infections of the kidney and bladder, the tide seems to be turning against us.
>
> "A recent drug company ad tells us that at any one time an estimated 8 million Americans have urinary tract infections. Over 20 million Americans have gonorrhea, many more have cancer, or one of a host of other *incurable* diseases. The organisms which we are told are responsible for urinary tract infections are no longer destroyed by our powerful, expensive antibiotics. In spite of this, each year the drugs become more powerful, costlier, and more dangerous. The simplistic "A pill for every ill" approach



to disease has backfired. We are beginning to kill as many people with the cure as does the unchecked disease."

****
ALIEN THOUGHTS CONTINUED ON PG 13
****

GOING APE

THE MAKING OF KING KONG
By Orville Goldner and George Turner. A.S. Barnes & Co., Inc.. Cranbury, NJ 08512; $17.50.

Reviewed by Buzz Dixon

KING KONG is the inarguable classic produced by science fiction film makers to date. It is the ultimate adventure film and one of the few films with excellent characterization (admittedly the excellence is solely found in Kong).

Goldner and Turner's book traces the story of KONG, giving much background information on producers Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, and special effects wizard Willis H. O'Brien. It traces the early careers of the three film makers.

A feast for both the eye and mind, the book has 268 photos or sketches taken from private collections, most never published before. Included are scenes and sketches from O'Brien's abandoned film project, CREATION, which lended many of its creatures and scenes to KING KONG.

There are several beautiful, moody photos of Kong's jungle, as well as scores of behind the scenes and special effects test footage pictures.

Goldner speaks with authority as he was one of the technicians who worked on KONG (especially in the Empire State Building scenes) and who is now director of the Chico State College Audio-Visual Center, California. He supplies many fascinating bits of history (such as producers Cooper and Schoedsack being the crew members of the airplane which down Kong. Cooper suggested, "We should kill the sonofabitch ourselves.") and lays to rest the myth of Charles Gemora playing Kong in some scenes.

The writing is clear and orderly, covering the chaotic happenings of the film in lucid fashion.

If you only buy two books this year, THE MAKING OF KING KONG should be both of them.

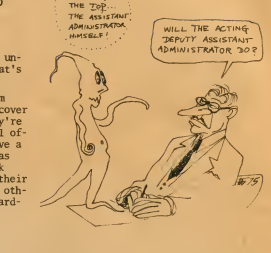
****

'As we decrease our sensitivity to pain we also decrease our ability to experience the simple joys and pleasures of life. The result is that stronger and stronger stimuli--drugs, violence, horror--are needed to provide people in ananesthetic society with a sense of being alive.

--Ivan Illich, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY
May, 1976

AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP K. DICK

CONDUCTED SEPTEMBER 10, 1976
BY DANIEL DePREZ



SFR: How about starting with the untitled book you've just sold. That's going to Bantam and Doubleday?

DICK: No, just to Bantam. Bantam will attempt to sell it to a hardcover publisher, but they own the...they're the prime purchaser, and they will offer it.... Doubleday does not have a policy of buying any book which has already been bought by a paperback house, so they are eliminated by their policy, but there are a number of other houses who might do it--the hardcover. But....

SFR: The paperback will come out first, though?

DICK: I really don't know how they work that. I honestly don't know. Bantam is the prime purchaser, though.

SFR: How can you describe the novel?

DICK: Well, that's the most difficult question of all to answer, I've found. I would acturally prefer not to describe the novel. For one thing, they purchased it from the rough draft, and there'll be many changes in the final draft, and I wouldn't want to have it freeze in the rough draft form. I know it seems strange not to be able to answer a question like that, "What is the novel about?", I always say, well, if somebody asked Shakespeare, "I understand you're writing a play called ROMEO AND JULIET, what's it about?" If he were to give an oral description of it, it'd probably sound like a terrible bomb. And after he got halfway through describing it, he'd begin to realize it sounded like a terrible bomb, and he would probably not write it. So, short oral synopses do not give adequate account of books. Let's say it's the story of an alternate universe, and of a tyrant named Ferris F. Fremont, who's President of the United States, and in 1968, after having shot the Kennedys, Dr. King, Jim Pike, Malcolm X, everybody...George Wallace...so that he is elected by a very large vote, there not being any real contenders, and sets out to destroy the two-party system. And it's the story of a group of people who manage to overthrow him.

SFR: Is this going to be marketed as a science fiction novel?

DICK: Oh yes, it's definitely science fiction, because the people who overthrow him are picked at random by an extraterrestrial satellite communications system which informs them what to do, and what information will bring down the tyrant, Ferris Fremont. and coordinates their efforts through direct radio communications with the satellite, which has been in orbit around the Earth for several thousand years, and periodically intervenes when tyrannical governments become too tyrannical. There seems to be no other way to depose them.

SFR: Then what about the collaboration between you and Roger Zelazny? How did that come about?

DICK: Well, that came about because I started DEUS IRAE, and I couldn't finish it because of my lack of knowledge of theology. And I met Roger in '68, and asked him if he would help me with the book, and he said he would, and he did, and his knowledge was adequate, and we were able to finish it, but it still took twelve years for the two of us to write the book, and it was very arduous for us to write. And we just sold that in England for a very large sum of money, so we finally will get som e money out of it. I don't think we will get much in this country, but we will get something on the English sale.

SFR: The bookstores in Portland are selling out of the book.

DICK: Well, it's sold pretty well in this country. It's sold over 5,000 copies in the United States, so we will make some money. But the English sale was good, it was between 8,000 and 9,000 dollars, and we hope for other good foreign sales.

SFR: Why do you think your books have sold so well in foreign countries, and not as -ell in America?

DICK: Well, the first answer that comes to my mind is "Damned if I know." Perhaps it's the general attitude towards science fiction in European countries, accepting it as a legitimate form of literature, instead of relegating it to the ghetto, with the genre, and regarding it as sub-standard. The prejudice is not there in France, Holland, England, and Germany, and Poland that we have in this country against science fiction. The field is accepted, and it doesn't have anything to do particularly with the quality of my writing, it has to do with the acceptance of the field of science fiction as a legitimate field. Bear in mind that many, many of the English writers wrote science fiction: Ian Foster, of course we always think of George Orwell, Huxley, and it's just natural. It wasn't a step down, into the gutter for them to do it, and it

would be here. If Norman Mailer were to write a science fiction novel---an inter-galactic novel---I doubt if he would. Saul Bellow wrote me recently, and he said he is writing science fiction, and he of course is a very fine writer, so maybe the ghetto walls will break down here. But I think it is the fact that they have a high regard for science fiction there. And I think also one of the reasons---especially in France---is that they're aware that it's a field of ideas. The science fiction novel is a novel of ideas, and they're interested in the ideas. There's an intelligentsia in Europe among the students that appreciates the ideas. You don't have the equivalent intelligentsia here. We just don't have that interest in books of ideas that they have there. They appreciate the philosophical and other types of ideas in science fiction, and look forward to science fiction novels. They have a voracious appetite for them.

SFR: That would probably be the same reason, then, why science fiction books sell so well on college campuses.

DICK: Sure, yes, absolutely. I got a letter from a German editor. There are science fiction political organizations---right-wing and left-wing---there, too, that there's no equivalent for here at all. One of them, the left-wing one, voted me a vote of solidarity, and I thought that was neat. It was something like the Workers and Peasants for Science Fiction Gameinschaft. And it was clear to me from the letter that we just have nothing like that here, a kind of political science fiction groups, where they see them in terms of the sociological and political ideas and the effects on society of the 1984 type of novel---the dystopian novel. They take those dystopian novels very seriously there, they really do. I think another thing in the fact that the American people are apolitical. The dystopian novels don't really signify anything to the American people, because the American people are so politically naive that the dystopian novels don't seem significant to them, you know what I mean? They don't have the relevance to them that they would have to the European people.

SFR: The Americans seem to get more out of things like Tolkien.

DICK: Right, fantasy. But in Europe they're more politically aware, and in fact they will read political things into novels which are not there actually. I've read a lot of European criticism of my writing in which they see a lot of sociologic and political science type ideas which isn't there at all. "The Decomposition of the Bourgeois Structure of Society" I think was the name of one article about my writing, and how I had subverted the bourgeois society by destroying its fundamental concepts in a most subversive way. A way so deviously clever that I never mention politics. And this was so fundamental that the whole thing would collapse---the bourgeois society would collapse like a house of cards if I would just write two more books like UBIK. The fact that no political ideas were ever mentioned in UBIK merely showed how subversive this book was in undermining bourgeois society.

SFR: With reasoning like that, you could say the same thing about a Buster Keaton film.

DICK: Oh, certainly. That's your really subversive thing, where there's no political ideas expressed at all. It's too fundamental to be articulated.

SFR: How did you come to discover the I CHING so far ahead of most people in this country?

DICK: Well, I was interested in Jung. Jung wrote the introduction to the Wilhelm Baines translation, and I came across it in a...I'm not sure. I guess I came across it in a list of Jung's writings, and sent away for the I CHING in order to read Jung's introduction. And after reading Jung's introduction, I became interested in the I CHING. And I really had no intention of getting involved with the I CHING. I wasn't interested in Sinology at all, and I just got hooked right away, after reading Jung's introduction, and began to use it immediately. Jung also wrote an introduction to the Tibetan BOOK OF THE DEAD, and I got involved in that for the same reason.

SFR: About what year was this?

DICK: Oh, uh, 1960.

SFR: The reason I asked was that, in EYE IN THE SKY, while the characters are in Arthur Sylvester's mind-world, the personnel director of the research firm has to consult an oracle-like book to decide whether or not to hire the main character, and that reminded me very much of the I CHING.

DICK: I'd never heard of the I CHING then. I didn't hear of it until 1960.

SFR: It was just a strange coincidence then?

DICK: Just a coincidence. Just until you mentioned that, I didn't know that. I'll have to go read that. But it's another example of what...Paul Williams wrote the article on me in ROLLING STONE, and said I'm precognitive, and maybe it's an example of precognition. Good Lord!

(At this point, Philip K. Dick's can of Mother's Pride orange soda crawled across his brand new coffee table for about five inches.)

SFR: I've only seen that happen a couple of times.

DICK: My can of orange soda just levitated itself. But one of the things I have noticed is that when I write a book---I mean, I'm not sure if I'm precognitive or not---but I have noticed that when I write a book, very often the events of my life will later resemble events described in the book. This is really true, and it has become quite frightening to me. For instance, I wrote THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH before I had ever seen LSD, seen anybody take LSD, or read anything much except maybe one article by Huxley about LSD. Certainly nothing much about LSD, just the kind of romanticism of Huxley, who spoke of, you know, the kind of la-de-da, you know, opening all the doors as if it was just a magic key. And the horrific trips were something of course that he did not go into. Paul Williams simply did not believe I had written that book before I had had any contact with LSD. He checked with people before he was willing to -elieve that. And I have found that...I have found, for instance, in writing a book, that after I have written a book, a year or so later I will meet a girl by the same name as the girl in the book, with the same age, and many of the same characteristics. So close, in fact, that perhaps the girl could sue, claiming that the character was based on her. One case, I even gave the girl's boyfreind's name correctly. The girl's name is Cathy, and the boyfriend is Jack. After I had written the book, I met a girl named Cathy, and she was nineteen, and she had a boyfriend named Jack, and I thought later, you know, "I know I wrote that book before I ever met the other girl, Cathy." In real life, the Cathy that I met had a friend who was a police inspector, and she had some kind of strange relationship with him. He apparently busted her, but held back the bust in order to get information from her. In the book, that was exactly what occurred. That's in FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID, that she had---that Cathy has this relationship with Inspector McNulty. And I cannot account for these very, very close details. They're eerie, they're really eerie. The fictitious girl and the real girl both had an inspector friend who had power over her, to get information from her. Well, perhaps Paul Williams is correct, in this precognitive thing.

SFR: I was just going to ask if you'd ever met any of your characters. For instance, have you, since writing MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, met Mr. Takgomi?

DICK: No, I haven't. I certainly would like to, because I certainly was very fond of him. MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE was an anomaly in my writing. I had given up writing. I had actually decided to give up writing, and was helping my wife in her jewelry busi-

ness. And I wasn't happy. She was giving me all the shit part to do, and I decided to pretend I was writing a book. And I said, "Well, I'm writing a very important book. And to make the fabrication convincing, I actually had to start typing. And I had no notes, I had nothing in mind, except for years I had wanted to write that idea, about Germany and Japan actually having beaten the United States. And without any notes, I simply sat down and began to write, simply to get out of the jewelry business. And that's why the jewelry business plays such a large role in the novel. Without any notes, I had no pre-conception of how the book would develop, and I used the I CHING to plot the book.

SFR: Do you forsee yourself ever using the I CHING as heavily in writing a book as you did in MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE?

DICK: No, never again, because the I CHING failed me at the end of that book, and didn't help me resolve the ending. That's why the ending is so unresolved. The I CHING, uh...I did through the coins for the characters, and I did give what the coins got---the hexagrams---and I was faithful to what the I CHING actually showed, but when it came time to wind up the book, the I CHING copped out completely, and left me stranded. And since I had no notes, no plot, no structure in mind, I was in a terrible spot, and I began to notice...that was the first time I noticed something about the I CHING that I have noticed since. And that is that the I CHING will lead you along the garden path, giving you information that either you want to hear, or you expect to hear, or seems reasonable, or seems profound, up to a certain point. And then, just about the time that it's gotten your, you know, your credulity is there---you're willing to trust it---just about the time you've given it your faith and trust, it will zap you with the most malevolent, wrong information. In other words, it sets you up. It really does, it really sets you up. I regard the I CHING as a malicious spirit. As actually spirit, an animation. I think it is an evil book, and I no longer use it. And I don't recommend that people...I certainly do not recommend that people make important decisions on the basis of it. The more impor-ant the decision, the more it tends to hand you an answer which brings tragedy into your life. And I say that as...after using it for years and using it quite extensively. It is a liar. It speaks with forked tongue.

SFR: In the Paul Williams article, he mentions that you no longer take amphetamines, but that your body still goes through the same reactions when you're writing.

DICK: Yes, that's correct. I was evaluated at Hoover Pavillion Hospital at Stanford, which has the highest reputation on the West Coast for diagnostic evaluation---equivalent, say, to Yale on the East Coast---and they said I was taking it for a placebo effect of some kind. They couldn't figure out...blood tests showed that the amphetamines never reached my brain. They were baffled for the reason that I was taking them. So I stopped taking them. And I work the same way. I work at breakneck speed, and then I just crash for days, I literally sleep for days afterward, and I go through the entire cycle, and give all the evidence of having been wired all the time I was writing, and then crash afterward, and yet there's no amphetamines involved whatsoever. And this book I just sold to Bantam I wrote in twelve days. Which was the kind of thing I did when I took a great deal of amphetamines, and wrote all day and all night. That's 70,000 words in twelve days.

SFR: Could you write under any other kind of schedule, or would you want to?

DICK: Once I start a book, I like to just go through and finish it, because there's more chance of authentic continuity that way. I could never adopt this thing you hear about writing ten pages a day, writing from 9-5. You do your ten pages, and when you've done them, you stop. If you're hot, you're hot. If you're hot, you're gonna write until you drop. If you're cold, you could sit in front of the typewriter forever. So if I'm hot, I will just write. Before I wrote the novel in those twelve days, I took notes for 30 months before I was able to get started on the novel. For 30 months I was unable to find the handle for a novel. The second I found the handle for the novel, I did it in 12 days. So, you have the attempt to write a novel in a single, uninterrupted burst. If I could have it my way, I wouldn't even sleep while I w-s writing a novel, I'd just sit and start at page one, and write it straight through. If you're hot you should never stop. And I will never let anything interrupt me when I'm writing, which, I suppose, is why my girlfriend is moving out. She discovered that, uh...well, one time I was sitting there writing, and she came in and she said, "Could this friend of mine use your bathroom?" And I just had a hysterical fit. I had to stop writing so he could come in and use the bathroom. And I just went all to pieces. I was just terrible. I was like Beethoven. You know, Beethoven used to have these terrible tantrums. And I had a terrible tantrum. I carry it all in my head, and even though I had all these extensive notes, I never referred to them, I was carrying the notes in my head. And I know of no other way to write. That's the only way I know how

to write.

SFR: So whenever the next novel comes up depends on when you get the next handle?

DICK: Exactly. I could go for a year, I could go two years, I could go two weeks. This one, I was beginning to think I'd never get the handle. I had done almost 300,000 words of notes, and I was really beginning to think I would never get a novel out of it. And one day I was just thinking---just sitting there thinking---and all of a sudden the handle came to me. And the next morning I sat down and began to write. And within twelve days I had a complete rough draft, which I sold to Bantam. After 25 years of writing, I've learned one way of doing it, and I just don't know of any other way of doing it. The only exception, say, would be the collaboration with Roger Zelazny, where I'd do a part, and Roger would do a part, and I'd do a part, and years would go by between our parts. And we lost a lot of money from having to spend so many years writing it. But, as I say, I was in difficulty, and simply didn't have the background for the book, and needed his assistance.

SFR: Had he been thinking of something along those lines himself?

DICK: I think he just...his broad knowledge of things permitted him to pick it up. He's a very educated person, and a very skillful writer, and he was just an ideal person for those two persons. I like the parts that Roger wrote. I think he wrote some very funny parts. The pogo stick part that he wrote was the funniest part of the book. I was very pleased with what he did.

SFR: Do you think science fiction has a purpose beyond entertainment?

DICK: Well, it all depends on what entertains you. Some people are entertained by a Beethoven quartet, and if another person walks in who likes Jimi Hendrix, he hardly regards what he hears coming out of the phonograph as entertainment. It's gonna be difficult for him to believe that you're being entertained when you're listening to a Beethoven quartet. Here we have to go into semantics; what do you mean by "entertained"? Something that you find interesting and fascinating certainly is entertainment. Like, would you describe Milton's PARADISE LOST as entertainment? Is that an entertaining novel---or poem? I mean, I enjoy reading it. I suppose I would have to say I find it entertaining. If you mean, "Does science fiction have a didactic purpose?"---a message in the bourgeois sense of the novel as the "message novel", that teaches some

moral, it somehow improves the reader, the reader goes away after having read it a better person, he now knows something he did not know before (presumably about life). I have never accepted the bourgeois concept that the novel must do that, anyway, be it science fiction or any other kind of novel. I was thinking of a book like Donleavy's THE GINGER MAN, which is highly entertaining---I think it's a great novel---but I don't think that it made me a better person by reading it. I think aesthetics must be separated from morality here, and...well, you look at the Sistine Chapel ceiling, nd you can say, "Well, does this make you a better person, or do you just enjoy looking at it?", and the bourgeois person will always say it makes you a better person, because he is always thinking in terms of self-improvement. And the artist is always thinking of aesthetics. And it all depends on whether you're a member of the bourgeois---you will always say, "A good book is one which makes you a better person," and the aesthetic or artist-type will always say, "The aesthetic values are end values in themselves."

I can prove my point. Does listening to one of Beethoven's quartets of the third period...how does it make you a better person? I don't think anybody could ever show that listening to, say, the 13, 14, 15, or 16th quartets made you a better person. There's certainly no message, because they're abstract, so you're forced finally to admit that you listen to them either because you're compelled to, out of some sense of duty---that you ought to listen to good music---or you enjoy them, in which case you are back to entertainment. And I think that what we have to do is redefine entertainment to include enjoyment of very fine aesthetic works, in which case, I don't think science fiction need have any other purpose.

SFR: So it would probably be the publisher, more than anyone else, who would say, "Buy this book, it will make you a better person." and the writer who would say, "Buy this book, I think you'll enjoy it"?

DICK: Well, the publisher would want to sit on both stools. He would say, "It's full of sex, violence, action, and perversion, and all these things will make you a better person if you read about them." He'll have it both ways. I think the writer falls in love with his characters, and wants the reader to know of their existence. He wants to turn what are people known only to him into people known to a fairly large body of readers. That's my purpose. My purpose is to take these characters, who I know, and present them to other people, and have them know them, so that they can say that they've known them, too, and have enjoyed the pleasure of their company. And that is the purpose that I have, which, I suppose, is a purpose beyond entertainment.

The basic thing that motivates me is that I have have met people in my life, who I knew deserved to be immortalized, and the best I could do---I couldn't guarantee them immortality---but I could guarantee them an audience of maybe 100,000, like girls that I've met, or drinking buddies I've had, turn them from just somebody that I knew, and two or three other people knew, that I could capture their idiosyncratic speech mannerisms, their gentleness, their kindness, their humility, and make them available to a large number of people.

That's my purpose. So, I suppose in a way I have a purpose beyond entertainment. But I certainly wouldn't say that this is why people ought to write, or that they ought to write for any purpose beyond entertainment. But this is why I write. Always.

Especially I like to write about people who have died, whose actual lifetimes are over with, and who linger on only, say, in my mind and the minds of a few other people. I happen to be the only one who can write them down, and get their speech patterns down, and record incidents of great nobility and heroism that they have shown under very arduous conditions. I can do this for them, even though the people are gone. I have written about girls that I admire greatly, who are so illiterate that they would never read the book, even if I were to hand it to them. And I've always thought that was rather ironic, that I would make this attempt to immortalize them, when they were so illiterate that they could not or would not read the damn thing themselves.

But that isn't really the purpose of the book anyway. The purpose of the book is that other people should read it, and see...and I can convey my admiration for these girls, and my admiration for their heroism, my admiration for my drinking buddies, and the heroism that they showed, and the humor that they showed, and the love that they showed, and the wit that they showed, and the humanity that they showed. And get that down, and leave that as a permenent---or semi-permanent trace---in the stratum of society in which we live.

SFR: So you don't necessarily try to control your characters, you let them write their own stories pretty much?

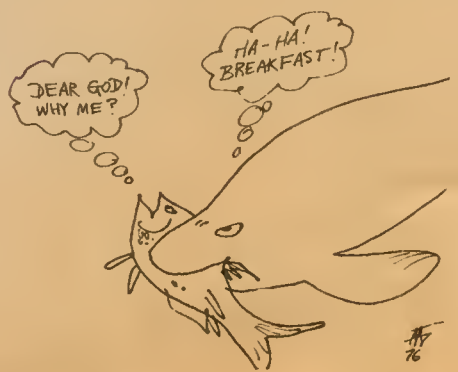
DICK: Very much so, yes, definitely. I try to remember---I write dialogue and develop scenes---how my friends did talk, and what they did say, and how they did behave, and how they did interact with one another, and the jokes they played on each other, and the games they played with one another, and so on. I want them to be themselves, and I don't try to manipulate them. The last thing I want to do is put my ideas into their mouths, and have them spout my philosophy. That's the last thing I want to do. That would probably be the furthest from the authentic thing that I want to achieve. So, although I write idea novels, I'm concerned more with the person facing the idea, the idea as extrapolation into a make-believe society, especially a dystopia. But the persons themselves are free to speak and act and be as they really were. And always to be themselves, and never to be just extensions of myself.

SFR: With the economics of sf as they are, why have you sold so many of your things to Ace and Doubleday, when they are so low-paying?

DICK: Well, I haven't sold anything to Ace for a long time, really. I sold OUR FREINDS FROM FROLIX 8 in, I think, 1970, but I don't sell to Ace anymore, and that was an anomaly---I just needed the money. I think there are 16 Ace titles, and they were all in the early part of my career.

As far as Doubleday goes, I had a very good relationship with Larry Ashmead, the editor-in-chief of Doubleday, and I liked the hardcover editions, and I didn't realise that the advances were miniscule. They were $1500. Now, I should have known that was miniscule, because that was what Ace -as giving me, and I knew that was miniscule, and two things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other. Now, I should have known that, but what happened was that the paperback sometimes paid very heavily, like UBIK (which was - Doubleday novel). Doubleday paid $1500. for UBIK but then the paperback people paid $10,000. of which I got $5,000. So you see, when you added it together, it wasn't all that bad. And I got $9,500. for DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? in the paperback, so the very low Doubleday advance didn't bother me.

Then it started to bother me, finally, when I wrote my anti-dope book, A SCANNER DARKLY. And I realized I had written a really great novel. Actually I had finally written a true masterpiece, after 25 years of writing, and my agent wrote back when he read the first part, and he said, "You're absolutely right, this is exceptional material." and then he went out and sold it to Doubleday for the same old goddamn two thou---by that time they were up to $2500---still Mickey Mouse money. "Here is this masterpiece, and we are going to pay you $2500. for it." And I fired my agent, and I prepared to buy the manuscript back from Doubleday, and I could never raise the money to buy it back from Doubleday. I couldn't get enough cash to buy it back. And Simon & Schuster offered to buy it from



Doubleday for $4000., so I would get a little more money (Larry Ashmead having then gone to Simon & Schuster). But Doubleday refused to relinquish it. They said $3000. was their limit for science fiction, and then they admitted $4000. was their limit, and then they turned around with A SCANNER DARKLY, and turned it over to their trade department, to sell it as a trade book, and there is no limit in the advance to a trade book. So they weren't limited to $3000. And they've got a masterpiece, and they put out almost no money at all.

So the next book then, I sold to Bantam for $12,000., and Doubleday was just out of luck. Doubleday said on the phone, very bitterly, "You're mercenary." And I said, "No, I have to eat. I have to live. That's what we have here. I owe the IRS $4,700.; I can't afford to sell you a novel for $3000." And, of course, I especially couldn't if I could sell it to Bantam for $12,000.

I never really got angry until this book, A SCANNER DARKLY. I knew the book was worth a great deal of money. I knew that it was really a fine book, and I worked five years on it. And I knew that I was being gypped. It was the first time in 22 or 23 years that I really realised I was being terribly gypped---just gang-banged is what it was. And Doubleday was crowing about this great book, and they were going to go to town. They were going to do this and do that with it, and I kept saying, "Well, why don't you give me a little more money? I mean, if you recognise the quality of the work, and you have such plans for it..." and that's when they said, "You're mercenary." And so they didn't get a shot at the next book. And they know it.

REG NOTE: It should be remembered that Phil is speaking of moneys advanced to him in anticipation of money earned by the book. There are royalty rates by which earnings are figured---so much per copy sold. In the long run an author doesn't lose any money by accepting a low advance if the book sells enough copies to earn the advance and more in royalties. However, Doubleday has a policy (the last I heard) of never reprinting a new hardcover of their science fiction line--no matter how well it sells. A trade book, however, will be reprinted in hardback for as long as it sells well. So Doubleday's decision to publish A SCANNER DARKLY as a trade book is to Phil's advantage, and will probably increase the paperback advance as well. And I have never heard of Doubleday cheating on royalty statements.

Nevertheless, most authors always need money, and live in the financial short-run. Too, a large advance is a sign of prestige and success.

SFR: So then, it's a case of word getting around now that if you want a Philip K. Dick novel, you're going to have to pay $12,000. or more?

DICK: That's correct. When you start out, you take what you can get. When I started out, I was paid $1,000. by Ace, and then later, $1500. Therefore, I was actually getting more money than new writers are getting now from Laser, because of the inflation factor. I'm talking about all the way back to 1955, I was getting $1,000. So they're really getting less. The thing is, when you're starting out, you take what you can get. You're glad to get in print, and I think that's a proper attitude. It's just that when you've been writing for twenty-five years, and you've won...for instance, my novel FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, and I got about $3500. in toto for it. That is $2500. advance, and about $1,000. on the paperback. So I got about $3500. in all for the American sales on that novel which won that award. I worked on that from 1970 until 1973. Four years I worked on that novel, four years for that sum of money.

Well, then I wrote A SCANNER DARKLY, my anti-dope novel, and that's the first time I really realized I was being burned. And I was so mad. I felt I had written a novel equal to ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT. I felt that what ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT was to war---that anybody that read it would never pick up a rifle as long as they lived---that anybody who ever read A SCANNER DARKLY would never drop dope as long as they lived. In it I had all my friends who are now dead or crazy from dope, sitting around laughing and talking, you know, and then they all go crazy and die. It broke my heart to write it, it broke my heart to read it, it broke my heart to do the galleys. I did the galleys two weeks ago, and I cried for two days after I did the galleys. Every time I read it I cry. And I believe that it is a masterpiece. I believe it is the only masterpiece I will ever write. Not that it's the only masterpiece I have ever written, but the only one I will ever write, because it is a book that is unique. And when I got $2500. for all this work, I knew I was being burned. Because there were human beings in that book who have never been put down on paper before.

And the person who came along and saved that book was Judy-Lynn del Rey at Ballantine. Larry Ashmead at Doubleday turned the manuscript over to her to see if Ballantine wanted to buy the paperback rights, and she said, "Well, I'm not interested in books on drugs. But I'll read it anyway." And she was the first person to say, "This book is not your standard book. It's not your science fiction book, it's not your standard anything." And then she had me completely revise the book. She showed me how to develop the characters, and when she got through working with me on that book, it...she...I meaan...that didn't get me any money, I still didn't get any money, but I've written a great novel, you know, and I finished the galleys two weeks ago... shit, it wasn't two weeks ago, I mailed them off last Monday...and I was sitting there crying and crying afterwards, you know, and I've read it a number of times now. You'd think by now that the shock effect would wear off. They're all taking dope, and they're all happy, and they're all wonderful people. Then the terrible destruction of their brains begins, and they begin to lose contact with reality, and they begin to gyrate around, and they no longer can function. And by the time the book ends, the protagonist is lucky if he can clean out a bathroom---clean out a toilet. Every time I read it, it has the same effect on me. The funny parts are the funniest parts ever written, and the sad parts are the saddest parts ever written, and they're both in the same book.

My new book, the one I just sold to Bantam, has a lot to do with Christianity, and it's going to make two groups of people mad; the Christians and the non-Christians. They're both going to be furious. The Christians are going to be mad because it doesn't fit any conception they have of Christianity, and the non-Christians are going to be mad because it has to do with Christianity at all. It has to do with what my idea of what it is. I did 30 months of research into the origins of Christianity, and the Greek mystery cults, such as the Orphic religion, and also into neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and so on. I have very powerful beliefs, and I have experienced very powerful religious experiences, but they do not fit the doctrines of the Church, particularly. Yet I will stick by them as authentic.

In fact, right in front of me now, we have a book called ANGELS, ELECT AND EVIL, which is a study of angelology. I, for instance, beleive that angels exist. I believe there are atmospheric spirits of a higher order than human beings, that we cannot see, that are extremely powerful, and have extremely powerful effects on our liv-

es when they care to. I think most of the time they don't care to. I know that we are under the protection of a powerful extraterrestrial intelligence, and if you want to call it God, fine. If you don't want to call it God, fine. In my book, it's called VALIS, which stands for Vast Active Living Intelligence System. I prefer that word to God. And it intervenes in human affairs to regulate them, and coordinate them, and ameliorate our conditions.

SFR: Right now, the first reports are coming back from our probes on Mars. What effect, if any, would news of life on Mars have on humanity?

DICK: You mean the average person?

SFR: Yes. What would it do to their thoughts of themselves, and their place in the universe?

DICK: All right. Yesterday, Chairman Mao died. To me, it was as if a piece of my body had been torn out and thrown away, and I'm not a Communist. There was one of the greatest teachers, poets, and leaders that ever lived. And I don't s-e anybody walking around with any particularly unhappy expression. There have been some shots of people in China crying piteously, but...I woke my girlfriend up at 7:00 in the morning. I was crying. I said, "Chairman Mao has died." She said, "Oh my God, I thought you said 'Sharon was dead'."---some girl she knows. I think it would be like that. I think there would be little, if any, real reaction. If they can stand to hear that Chairman...that that great poet and teacher, that great man, that ...one guy on TV---one Sinologist--- said "The American public would have to imagine as if, on a single day, both Kennedys, Dr. King, and Franklin D. Roosevelt were all killed simultaneously," and even then they wouldn't get the full impact of it. So I don't really think that to find life on Mars is going to affect people. One time I was watching TV, and a guy comes on, and he says, "I have discovered a 3,000,000-year-old humanoid skull with one eye and two noses. And he showed it---he had twenty-five of them, they were obviously fake. And it had one eye, like a cyclops, and had two noses. And the network and everybody took the guy seriously. He says, "Man originated in San Diego, and he had one eye and two noses." We were laughing, and I said, "I wonder if he has a moustache under each nose?"

People just have no criterion left to evaluate the im!ortance of things. I think the only thing that would really affect people would be the announcement that the world was going to be blown up by the hydrogen bomb. I think that would really effect people. I think they would react to that. But outside of that, I don't think they would react to anything. "Peking has been wiped out by an earthquake, and the RTD---the bus strike is still on." And some guy says, "Damnit! I'll have to walk to work!" So? You know, 800,000 Chinese are lying dead under the rubble. Really. It cannot be burlesqued.

I think people would have been pleased if there was life on Mars, but I think they would have soon wearied of the novelty of it, and said, "But what is there on Jupiter? What can the life do?" And, "My pet dog can do the same thing." It's sad, and it's also very frightening in a way, to think that you could come on the air, and you could say, "The ozone layer has been completely destroyed, and we're all going to die of cancer in ten years." And you might get a reaction. And then, on the other hand, you might not get a reaction from people. So many incredible things have happened.

I talked to a black soldier from World War II who had entered the concentration camp---he had been part of an American battalion that had seized a German death camp---it wasn't even a concentration camp, it was one of the death camps, and had liberated it. And he said he saw those inmates with his own eyes, and he said, "I don't believe it. I saw it, but I have never believed what I saw. I think that there was something we don't know. I don't think they were being killed." They were obviously starving, but he says, "Even though I saw the camp, and I was one of the first people to get there, I don't really believe that those people were being killed by millions. For some reason, even though I myself was one of the first human"--- notice the words "human beings"---"human beings to see this terrible sight, I just don't believe what I saw." And I guess that's it, you know. I think that may have been the moment when this began, was the extermination of the gypsies, and Jews, and Bible students in the death camps, people making lampshades out of people's skins. After that, there wasn't much to believe or disbelieve, and it didn't really matter what you believed or disbelieved

SFR: Just two days ago, I was waiting for a bus in Stockton, and a man sat down on the bench next to a woman sitting next to me, and he started off by talking about how high prices were. Then he said, "Things haven't been the same since World War II. You can't believe in anything anymore." So it seems like a turning point for a lot of people.

DICK: Yeah. I think that, like in my writing, reality is always a soap bubble, Silly Putty thing anyway.

In the universe people are in, people put their hands through the walls, and it turns out they're living in another century entirely. This is a feeling I've had ever since I started writing, which is from 1951 on, that if I discovered that this entire building that we're sitting in now---this apartment---was a mock-up---a dummy--- and extraterrestrial intelligences were looking through one-way ceilings at us, I think that for several minutes I would be amazed. But I think I would get over it after a couple of minutes. And when you realize that--- you know what I mean?---that it would not permanently affect my equilibrium. There would be an initial shock, but I often have the feeling---and it does show up in my books---that this is all just a stage.

And this comes out in my new book that Bantam bought. The guy realizes ---I mean, he's just an ordinary person like us, and it traces him from growing up in Berkeley, and it's semi-autobiographical---and the satellite which has been orbiting Earth, suddenly reveals to him that it's actually A.D. 70. That it's the first century A.D. That everything he sees is just so much gingerbread over the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire is still in control. And nothing has really happened since the year 70, and that they have just kept plastering more layers of gingerbread over it, and that he has to deal with this problem. He has to deal with the tyranny which is really that of the Roman Empire. And I'm willing to admit that I halfway believe that.

In other words, that...I read the new Britannica article on time, and that some of these basic categories of perception that we have, like time and space, are not only difficult to define---time being very difficult to define---but maybe illusory. I mean change may be illusory, you know, it may be A.D. 70. It may be that we're still living in the Roman Empire. It may be just that we keep pasting more and more layers of gingerbread to disguise it, so that we think, you know, that there's been these successive changes, and actually there hasn't been, and so on.

If somebody were to take that new book of mine and say, "How much of this book is fact, and how much of this book is fiction?" I wouldn't be able to tell them. I really wouldn't be able to tell them. And when my Bantam editor comes out here, he's going to...there's a lot of questions he wants to know, because he's beginning to get the uneasy impression that I believe a lot of what I say in my new book. And when he talks to me, he's going to get an even uneasier impression when I say, "I have a very strong feeling that we're in a kind of maze that has been built for us. And we're being tested, and run through the maze, and evaluated, and hindered from time to time, and notes are being taken." And I always feel that we're being timed. We are being timed. But I really have that -eeling very strongly, and so nothing would really surprise me.

I feel as if causality itself has ceased to be. Ever since Hume demonstrated so beautifully that causality is merely custom. Ever since I read the book---not necessarily since he wrote it, but ever since I read it--- I have had the feeling that perhaps much of what we take to be ironclad chains of events are nothing but mere custom, mere sequence, mere progression, and are not so ironclad.

I remember that I read in ROLLING STONE one time that the Brahmin goes through two cycles: during one part of its cycle, it sleeps, and during one

part of its cycle, it dances. We all think we're in the part of the cycle where Brahmin is awake and dancing. In actuality, we're in the part of the cycle where Brahmin is asleep, but, Brahmin is waking up. And when Brahmin wakes up, this world that Brahmin is dreaming, will disappear.

And when I read that, I thought, "Well, that just about expresses my basic view, in my books, although I hadn't known that.

SFR: They're all dealing with the point where Brahmin is waking up.

DICK: Right, right. This is a very crucial stage now, because Brahmin is not completely asleep. Brahmin is waking up. And when it wakes, this dream world will disappear---parts of it will begin to vanish right before our eyes, as it begins to wake up. Brahmin is not dancing, Brahmin is sleeping, but soon it will dance.

I think we've reached the most crucial time in 2,000 years. I think that there has already begun, some titanic process of revelation to man, of what man is, where he came from, what his role is, and that is very much connected with Brahmin waking up. Because if Brahmin is asleep, we, too, are asleep. That everything is asleep, because there is nothing that is not Brahmin. And as we wake up, we remember---it's a form of remembering---and we remember suddenly who we really are, where we came from, and....

I really believe in this, and it's in my new book, and I know that Bantam editor is going to want all that taken out. He's going to say, "Phil, I don't know. I think you really believe all this stuff, don't you?" And I'm going to have to say to him, "Well, when the white man says jump, I jumps."

But the fact of the matter is, I really... In my book, the character suddenly remembers---the satellite has him remembering, going back 2,000-3,000 years, and he remembers his origins, and they're not on Earth, they're from beyond the stars. And I honestly believe that.

In the Greek Orphic religion, they ---that was the mystery that you learned. You recovered your memory. It's called anamnesis, which was the loss of amnesia. You remembered your origins, and they were from beyond the stars. They weren't all that successful, but I think now the time has come, where that kind of memory will return to human beings. Long-term memories, which are buried in each of us, which is very much associated with Jung's racial unconscious, you see. And when we begin to remember, then we can begin to understand what our real role is, because the two are very closely identified: the memory of that very long, long life-span, and what we should do.

We will understand what right conduct is. And I think that it will spook the Jesus freaks. And I say that as an ardent Christian, but I think it will spook most Christians. I think they will discover that they have been worshiping planes that they made out of tinfoil, to attract other planes. It's not going to be what they expect at all.

Actually, I don't think we can say till the memory sets in, till that amanesis sets in. And when it sets in, as it begins to occur, it will be the great turning of the cosmic wheel for mankind, and the universe.

I'm very optimistic about it. I think it's gonna be a really exciting thing. And although I put down drugs, and I certainly don't recommend that anybody take them, I think that some of the people who took LSD experienced a little of this. And I think that there was a certain validity in what, like, Huxley said about the doorways of perception. And Castenada, too, and things like that---people who were working with some of the mescaline-type drugs---that there is another reality very close, that's impinging on our reality, and will probably very soon break through to our reality. Either we will break through to it, or it will break through to us. But the two will impinge on the other, and we will suddenly discover a...we are in a world which has more dimensions to it than we had thought.

I guess that means I'm taking my own writing as more fact than fiction than I used to. I don't think I ever took it as completely fiction, I always, you know, was reaching for an answer. Groping for an answer to the question of "what is real?" "What is reality?" And I think I am finally beginning to get a sense of what is real. And one of the things that is not real is time. There's no doubt about it. Change and time are not real. The Greek philosopher Parmenides was the first one to come forth and say that the universe does not really change. There is some underlying structure that is always the same. If we could only find out the nature of that, and reach down to it. And it is somehow symmetric, and that was about all he could say about it; that it was somehow symmetric.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Dick.

****

LETTER FROM NEIL KVERN

No date

'In SFR 18 you said "The poem sent by a hoaxter in the name of R. A. Lafferty was given a chorus of high marks. Tsk. The real poet needn't 'hide' behind a famous name to get his/her work published."

'This is bullshit! You know damn well you'd never consider poetry for publication in prestigious SFR without the author being someone already next-to-God. I think the hoaxter probably knew this when he/she submitted the poem in the first place; fandom is, at present, "controlled" by a sect of snobbish people, at least the major voices in fandom are such as SFR and ALGOL. I'm not complaining on this issue--just that your idealistic comment falls somewhat short of your general practice... doesn't it?

'No harm intended--just want to make you think about it.'

((Your judgement of 'bullshit' is itself bullshit. I consider every submission on its merits. I rarely receive sf or fantasy poetry, and since my taste in poetry is individual and demanding, this combination of factors results in extremely rare appearances of poetry in SFR. I do not have an editorial commitment to publish some poetry, regardless, as a quota. At the same time, yes, let us say, if Robert A. Heinlein were to send me a truly awful couplet, I would publish it---just because he wrote it. For its rarity and possible significance.))

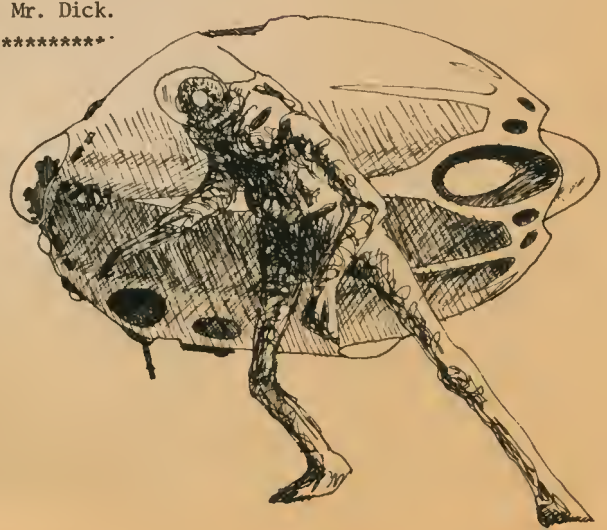
****

LETTER FROM BILL GIBSON

August 29, 1976

'Dear Richard,

I have a certain sympathy for Charles Platt (SFR 18), although I think that your reply is a fair one. I'm not just one of "Those few who wish to sample experimental, 'modern' sf", as you put it; I'm actually a fan of the stuff. ("Hey, don't tell me you actually read that crazy J.G. Ballard stuff?!!") I think that



Platt does himself a disservice, though, in merely dismissing Schweitzer's criticism as parochial. Schweitzer (and this is soley on the basis of material of his I've seen in SFR) is a conservative critic, while Platt (for want of a better word) is a radical editor, and while I would probably side with Platt in most arguments concerning the possibilities of fiction, Schweitzer does a better job of trying to communicate with Platt than Platt does with Schweitzer...You've said (or something to this effect) that all fiction is essentially pornography. Kafka said something to the effect that books we need are seldom the ones we want. The conservative critic resists innovations in form and technique, while denying ("It's all just porn.") that fiction has any radical potential in the first place...Your position works very well, within sf's literary borders, because the bulk of sf is pornography--what Orwell termed "sub-sexual pulp pornography". In my own application of Sturgeon's Law, the great bulk of crap is just that, while the fraction of value is something else. I like to imagine that I read fiction in the hope of encountering that fraction of "something else".'

((I do not go along with the misuse of the word 'pornography' to mean anything reprehensible, warped, ill-written, or of 'base' appeal. Pornography is 'hardcore' sex fiction. Go find another word to describe other fiction fixes. And while I'm at it, let me say a few good words in behalf of pornography...and mine in particular. Porno is liberating in its way, does 'blow' minds closed and ignorant in many ways, and can be a vehicle for serious message. In fact, things can be said about life and society in porno that would be difficult to say in other genres, because porno editors don't care what you say between the sex scenes. Further, I've had people tell me they were introduced to certain sex techniques and sexual anatomy through my books, and are the better for it. Most notably, an astonishing number of men don't know a damned thing about a woman's sexual anatomy and how to really give pleasure. A lot of men have learned from me. AND a depressingly large proportion of women don't know a thing about a man's pleasure centers or how to attend to them. I give detailed instructions. I consider good porno writing as noble an accomplishment as good sf or good historical fiction, or good Literature fiction. In fact, maybe giving a reader a hard-on may be better than giving him a bore. Is that conceivable? Could RAVISHED be of greater value than, say, THE GAMESMAN? Who decides ---except the readers?))

((But---yes, I see the point that sf and porno are attractive to readers for subconscious, deeply emotional reasons...deep-seated character/personality pressures and needs, in the individual. Too, structural societal forces can "urge" an interest in a given type of fiction. It's all multi-layered and complicated.))

****

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONTINUED

8-15-76 It rained hard yesterday and this morning; my heart bleeds for those tourists who have gotten such a sad impression of Oregon. I am, of course, a member of the James G. Blaine Society which urges visitors to merely visit Oregon---not stay. I am an Ecotopian in spirit. (I am now reading ECOTOPIA all the way through; a review will follow.)

This diary is tending more and more to the personal---a kind of personalzine within SFR---and less to thoughts of s-f. Of course there are only so many s-f thoughts to have over a three month period. Most of those will be embodied in the reviews and notes sections.

We've decided to buy a fluorescent light fixture for the basement which uses Plant-Gro fluorescents which give off 'just the right light wavelengths for optimum growth conditions'. It has two of these special fluorescents (48" long) and will permit us to grow vegetables in a 3' x 5' space under it. Mostly salad stuff, I imagine...all winter long. The appeal is that it can be 'on' 24 hours a day---bringing up crops in a month. The unit costs $23.00 and will be cost effective if we can get $2.00 worth of eatables per month from the installation. We shall see. Interesting experiment. I'll report on progress and results.

The above is the kind of thing which claims my major interest and enthusiasm now. I am the invisible hippie who is outwardly conformist and square, but who privately is damned near self-sufficient and the secret master, not of the world, but of himself and 90% of his life; who has a small counter-culture, counter-economy going in his home and yard.

●

8-19-76 Well, it's Ford and...uh? ...Dole. Robert Dole. Two midwesterners will do battle against Carter and Mondale. Ford, apparently, could not stand the thought of having a more "powerful" running mate. Not that it will make much difference. The stock market dropped eleven points today---presumably influenced partially by his nomination, and more partially by learning of the slackening in the important home & apartment house construction industry.

It appears more and more certain that there is no life on Mars. Sic transit gloria Burroughs.

It would be nice if nature would oblige us and come through with an epidemic of swine flu...which we have lurched into preparation for, but I suspect she will not be that obliging, and that if there is a flu epidemic this winter, it will be by a mutated flu virus not quite like the virus most of us will have been vaccinated against...which will bring great cries of "Fool" and "Idiot" and "Swine" down upon the head of our moronic President. But he'll be a lame duck President by then, anyway.

I suspect it is true what Lyndon Johnson said about Gerald Rudolph Ford---that he can't fart and chew gum at the same time.

●

8-21-76 Went to Sears last night and discovered the Gro-Lite fluorescent units on sale for $19.88. Fair enough--I bought one. I have it mounted now in the basement and will set it up for a bout of growing tomorrow. The folder enclosed with the unit says 15-16 hours of light is about all a plant can use; they need darkness and a slightly cooler temperature to complete their daily growth cycle, which sort of takes down my dreams of 24-hour growth...but we will see what happens. I'll start onions, carrots and some lettuce.

I note that the stock market dropped another ten points Friday to 973. My private Signal is 950 on the Dow. If the Industrial Average drops through that "floor", to me it will signal an aborted recovery and the resumption of the depression.

I have been receiving a goodly number of highly publishable letters of comment lately, for SFR. I groan at the thought of how much space they will take--and how much I'll have to edit and eliminate. And almost daily I am offered other goodies in article and review and interview forms. Damn. I suppose SFR is a success; I could easily publish monthly and never run dry of excellent material. No, NO, forget it; the mail load already is reaching the point where I am beginning to dread it, and am putting off processing a lot of it till the last possible moments. My return letters become shorter and shorter, until now I am tersely one and two-sentencing people. REG Regrets.

What would Israel have done if, say, a gang of Jordanian soldiers had axed and clubbed to death two Israeli officers in a demilitarized zone?

Probably wiped them up almost instantly, in spades. Why didn't the U.S. do that in Korea when that happened to our officers? Why do we take this sort of crap?

Frankly, if I were President, I'd deal with other countries (in the essentially amoral realm of international society) on their terms. Unprovoked attack would earn unprovoked attack, and I'd choose the place and time and weapons (as the North Koreans did). And I'd look them straight in the eye and claim it was their fault, that in the latest incident their men were attacking our snipers or artillery or fighter-bomber. It would be a transparent lie, and so what? I would have no compunction about lying to liars. And maybe they'd decide not to crease the old American paper tiger's tail next time.

It's the old Need we as a nation seem to have--to want to be loved, to the extent of taking all kinds of shit off other countries and two-bit dictators. As the President of the United States I'd prefer we were respected, and if not respected, at least feared. At the present time to a lot of primitive Asian and African leaders, we are seen as contemptible fools, gutless weaklings.

But, of course, if I were President, I'd pull our forces out of Korea as soon as possible.

●

8-23-76 Phoned Times Litho and told them to dig out the plates for SFR #14 and run off another 3000 copies. An order from Lois Newman just wiped out the last ten I had on the shelf.

Still haven't done the paste-ups for the reprint of #10; just a matter of finding the time.

Assuming I'm right about the coming/continuing Depression...it just occurred to me that because of their dedicated hardcore readership which WILL NOT sink below subsistence level, the s-f magazines may survive the Hard Times ahead far better than most other genre mags; certainly better than myriads of special interest mags on the stands now.

Science fiction is rationalized magic, and most of the time the magic (fantasy science) is only ritually "explained" or made credible. Which is okay as far as economic survival is concerned. The irrational; the interest in the occult, the UFOs, in Astrology, in religion, in much of the mystical "insights" of the mental sciences--all this belief in the unprovable is the cultural expression of the savage in us. That savage is far stronger and unkillable than most of us realize. There will always be a place or places for technological fantasy (S-f) and the other, non-rationalized, fantasies necessary to the human experience. STAR TREK and THE OMEN are blood brothers.

●

8-24-76 John Kelly, a man with more postage and generosity and dedication than I can take (he sends clips and articles and interviews from papers, magazines, etc...endlessly) sent a letter or two recently which impressed me and started me thinking. He recounted the impressive and disturbing chronology and geography of all the recent major earthquakes and eruptions in the world and suggested the cause was a conflicting movement of two or more of the vast underlying "floating" plates that comprise the surface layer of the planet.

Presumably this movement is caused by monumental pressures generated in the core. And that sooner or later the San Andreas fault will let go with a correction of the pressures building up in it. Today on the radio I heard that scientists in Southern California had discovered the mountains near the fault had risen 12 inches in the past few years, indicating great pressures and forces at work.

But why stop there? Could not these tremendous forces under the surface also have an effect on the atmosphere? I'm thinking of the incredible drought England and Europe has had--the worst in over two hundred years. And (on a minor note) our local summer has been rather cool and rainy.

Which leads me to suspect that mayhap for the next several years we will continue to have cycles of violent quakes, eruptions and exceptional weather patterns. Look for an alteration or interruption in the vital Asian monsoons. And perhaps an exceptionally severe winter for us. (Last year the winter was remarkably mild.)

Hell with it; I'm going out to weed the gardens.

●

8-26-76 By Ghod--the first sprouts were seen this morning in the pots under the Gro-Lites. Three days and five hours after planting. That's about twice to 2 1/2 times the normal rate, I think. Looking gooood!

The State Department (i.e. Kissinger) is following its (his) usual public relations window dressing to mask the abject gutless performance of turning once again, the other cheek. Our cheeks are so red now from being slapped I'm surprised it isn't more obvious to the people.

I refer to the big, hairy "show of force" in and around Korea--a carrier task force steaming importantly (and well publicized) to the Korean waters, the flying in of a tactical bombing squadron from Idaho, a bristly oh-so-defiant cutting down of that damned tree ("Take THAT *chop* and THAT." *chop*), as if all this show is going to do anything but distract the American people from the shit-eating performance of our leaders... or "leaders". I note with disgust that Jimmy Carter approves the administration's handling of the situation. Mustn't offend the North Koreans, you know. What would the world think of us? Tsk tsk. Too bad they killed 2 of our officers, but...We are now in the process of virtually begging them to apologize. How the North Koreans and Chinese and Russians must be snirkling up their sleeves at us. (Snirkling: Sneer-and-chuckling) The South Koreans are astounded at our performance.

If we as a people want to be "a world power" we'll have to have the courage and fortitude to be powerful. If not, then let's admit it and get the hell out of places we have no business being in.

Don't anybody explain to me what the hell is going on in Lebanon. I'm waiting for CBS or NBC News to perform that task. So far the major media TV news forces haven't been willing (or been allowed) to tell the American people who has been supplying the vast quantities of arms to the Christians and Moslems and Palestinians, why the Syrians (who are supplied by Russia) intervened to save the Christian (anti-communist) side from losing the war, and who benefits in this country from keeping this background information unspoken. In any other war this type of knowledge is instantly broadcast. Not so this time. Why not?

●

9-4-76 Ho-ho, the rate of unemployment ticked upward .1 to 7.9%, which must have sent tremors of doom through the Ford camp. The D-J Industrial average, having sunk to 961, has rallied to 989. I doubt it will reach 1,000 again, though.

What is not so puzzling any more is why loans, nationwide, are so low, continuing in the 115 billion area... down from 116 a month ago, and from 123 a year ago. Interest rates continue to slide gracefully downward, while manufacturer's inventories rise gracefully and consumer spending remains passive.

Why is the economy "pausing"? The loan volume isn't rising because there is no need to finance expansions. The manufacturing operating rate is at about 75%, well below the strain level that impels new plant and new machinery purchasing. The rise in inventories suggests that consumers aren't buying enough to sustain even the current rate of production, and sooner or later the factories will have to cut back on production. Currently the car companies are roaring ahead to build good stocks of 1977 models, and Ford is operating at peak to buffer the coming strike by the UAW. So this spurt by the car companies is warping the picture a bit by appearing to show a

more healthy economy than is true. Along about the end of October the handwriting should be on the wall: slow sales, the cars will stop rolling off the lines, and layoffs will begin.

The underlying reality as I see it is this: the oil crisis, an over-inventory cycle peak, and an increasingly heavy debt structure all combined to send the country into the 1974-75 recession/depression. The inventory problem corrected itself naturally--production was cut till stocks were sold off, and then production resumed.

BUT: The cost of energy is still double or triple what it was before 1974, and this increase in true-dollar costs is still working its way through the economy. You see it in constantly rising utility bills, for instance. This means, simply that it costs more for necessities, and leaves less of our incomes for non-essential "luxury" buying.

State, county, and city governments are having to cut back on services, are cutting staffs. Voters are saying NO! to new levies.

And meanwhile the Federal government--Congress--is running "only" 50-60 billion dollar yearly debts to hype the economy. Fortunately, the increased supplies of food stocks and manufactured goods has offset the vast increases in fiat money created by the government. But sooner or later the farmers and ranchers are going to cut back on production (because they lose too much or don't make enough per cow, per bushel, per acre) and food prices will abruptly zoom. Then the "inflation rate" will hit 10% or more and people will squeal.

And the federal debt continues to increase--every year it takes an extra five billion or so to pay interest on the debt. Nobody much cares now, but in 1979 I expect the deficit to hit 100 billion per year, and the inflationary stresses of this kind of printed money will cause even more unemployment and mis-direction of resources. (Remember when Lyndon Johnson was keeping the entire federal budget under 100 billion? Remember when Nixon's 12 billion dollar deficits were appalling?) We are heading into a hyper-inflation unless Carter (who is promising to be an 'activist' President) becomes an arch conservative in fiscal matters. No way. He will end up slapping on wage-price controls. And go on to ruling by decree in the "National Emergency".

This fall--right now--the big banks are taking huge unreported losses on the multi-billion dollar loans they made five-four-three-two years ago to the underdeveloped nations. Those loans are coming due and very few of those countries are willing or able to make payments; they are calling for deferments and extensions... and what are the banks to do but go along? Truth is, those loans are BAD, and that money is lost. And those banks are getting shakier and shakier. 1978-79-80 should see another banking crisis.

✡

My Gro-Lites in the basement are not producing the tremendous growth in my seedlings I had hoped for. The lettuce and carrots are coming along slowly, but the onions are lagging. Tsk. I have completed outlining the new backyard garden with inset brick and have stripped off the turf. In the week ahead I'll dig up the ground and get out the rocks. This area of Portland is rocky as hell. Will set the sod in the bottom of 8-10-inch deep growing area as drainage help and composting. This new garden will add 8 square yards of new growing area for next year. I intend to build a cold frame soon, too.

✡

It may be that the SFR ads in Analog are worth the money; a recent surge in subs has to be because the new ad that appeared in the October issue. If I can afford it I'll continue them. Times Litho delivered the reprint of TAC #10 yesterday. # 14 will be delivered on the 7th. I quiver in dread of the bill.

I wish Freff would send the interview with Kelly Freas; I'm getting antsy.

●

9-7-76 I got a call from the Portland emergency rescue unit last night about 10:30...the time is vague in my memory--and the lieutenant in charge told me my father had 'trouble breathing' and an ambulance was on the way to take him to the Oregon Medical School hospital or the Veterans' hospital.

Some concerned fellow tenants at his apartment building had discovered him and alerted the Manager, who called the rescue truck. (Just like on EMERGENCY on TV.)

I thanked him and said I'd check with the hospitals in the morning. I thought Dad had had an emphysema attack and that all he'd need was a few days off cigarettes and on oxygen.

✡

A few minutes later Jon Gustafson called from Kansas City to tell me I'd won another Hugo--Best Fan Writer. I am pleased, of course. Jon mentioned, too, that he had interviewed Tim Kirk, and that interview will be in the February issue along with Jon's s-f art review column.

✡

I'll have some comments on the Hugo Award winners when the complete results are published, soon. At this moment I'd like to thank all who voted for me.

✡

Now back to Dad. I called this morning after my trip to the Post Office to get the expected load of accumulated holiday mail, and found he was in the Coronary Care unit of the Veterans' Hospital. He had suffered a severe stroke and possibly a heart attack. He was resting well, was conscious.

Dad's brother, Monroe Geis, and I went up to the Vets' Hospital and saw him. Dad's left arm and side are paralyzed. He cannot speak, though he understands what is said to him. He has all the latest electronic monitoring gear hooked up to him. Quite a modern section.

He had a huge ball of a bandage on his right hand to keep him from pulling out the i.v. unit (which he had tried to do). Why? Some old people don't want to go on living as part vegetable. The people who found him at the apartment building said that he had told them 5 days ago that he didn't think he'd be around much longer. Perhaps he "knew" somehow that a stroke or heart attack was coming. Maybe the body/mind is aware on deep levels of the clot about to break loose, the aneurism about to pop...

The doctor we talked to at the hospital didn't say it, but I know severe strokes and heart attacks are often followed by more of the same. They don't know where in the brain his stroke hit.

I'm not very hopeful he'll ever get out of that hospital alive. After discussing it with Monroe we went to his building and I paid ten days' rent on his apartment, and we will move his stuff out in the next few days. He cannot ever live alone again, if he lives. I'd prefer him to live with us, here, in my home, if that is possible.

Dad is 73 years old.

This afternoon I worked a bit in my gardens, and will now go down to do some typing for this issue, and fill new subscription and back issue orders.

This afternoon, too, Times Litho delivered the 3000 reprints of SFR #14. Life goes on.

●

9-9-76 Dad was able to say the first parts of a few words yesterday morning when I went to see him. His heartbeat looked solid and regular to my untrained eyes. I began to have second thoughts about moving his stuff out of his apartment; I called, and then went over to pay the balance due on this month, just on the off chance that he lives and recovers enough to be able to live alone with constant visits from a friend in the building who lives directly above him ...(who volunteered to do the job of nurse-companion if Dad is able to leave the hospital in a few months after therapy). Miracles do happen; he <u>is</u> a tough old bird. He had a collapsed lung three years ago and almost died, had surgery for bladder cancer last January, and now this. Somehow, he survives.

✡ ✡ ✡

Got the check for payment for my novelette, "The One Immortal Man", from Futura Publishers. They sent a cheque for £170. Bemused, I had heard earlier in the morning that the British pound had sunk below $1.70 per pound because of financial fears regarding the English maritime workers decision to strike come Sunday.

I took the check to my bank and got an exchange rate lf $1.74. The branch will no doubt get revised foreign exchange rates in the A.M.) It came to $295.80...not bad. I have some secret hopes the story will be picked up from ANDROMEDA-2 for reprinting in the year(s) ahead.

☆

The more Jimmy Carter (for tactical reasons) seeks a centrist position not too far from Ford's stands, the more the old tweedle-dum, tweedle-dee ennui will set in, and people will tune out politics, thinking there is no real choice anyway... What fun if Gene McCarthy, the rightist party, and the Libertarian party could get in on those nationally televised debates. ☆

So Mao is dead at 82. And President Ford said he was a 'very great man.' Was Stalin a very great man, too? How times change. Mao was a tyrant a few years ago, responsible for untold thousands of deaths-by-purge. Ah, good old doublethink.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 49

****

IS THERE SCIENCE FICTION BEYOND THE BORDER?

Herewith, with permission, a letter from BRUCE ROBBINS, a quote from his Catalogue/Newsletter #5, and an article by Bruce. They are a different perspective, and they are occasionally harsh and strong in judgement. I value both.

---REG

28 August 76

'I meant to comment on a letter from George Price some issues back. There's no need to be theoretical about other encyclopedias of sf and fantasy. I have four sitting on my shelves.

'1. INTERPLANETARY FLIGHT AND COMMUNICATION (9 volumes) by the Russian N.A. Rynin. Originally published and sold by the author himself from his Moscow apartment in the 20's and 30's, they came out in English in 1971 as a spin-off of the American space program. Rynin put together all that he could discover in fact and fiction about interplanetary flight and communication. It's the first, and certainlu last, time that an encyclopedic survey of sf if graced with substantial mathematical formulae: both sf and space science have grown so that one person can only master one or the other.

'2. ARCANA (2 volumes) by 49 professors at various Italian universities (1969, 1971) is the most beautiful encyclopedia of our field, and the most useless. Their definition of the fantastic includes pornography, and the sf and fantasy content (of the "straight" variety) is swamped (in my opinion) by the "porn" content. Not one of the many full color illos depicts a "straight" scene. I got one volume in a trade and bought the other from the Italian publisher for $25. The two (if still available) would therefore cost $50. The contents, however, are being reshuffled and coming out in a series of low cost paperbacks. The "straight" sf and fantasy content is collected in one of the paperbacks (#4 of 8 volumes so far) which will cost you $3 or $4 if you can find someone who sells Italian books.

'3. ENCYCLOPEDIE DE L'UTOPIE, DES VOYAGES EXTRAORDINAIRES ET DE LA SCIENCE FICTION (1972) by Pierre Versins is the single most important book on sf ever published. Versins has read more sf in more languages than any English-speaking person I know, and I know only two Europeans who have the potential of going beyond Versins. I have read this monstrous 8-1/2" x 11" 1000-page tome twice, and dip into it constantly. (News note: La Maison d'Ailleurs, the world's first sf museum. opened may 1, 1976 in Yverdon, Switzerland. The curator is Pierre Versins, of course, since it is his collection which forms the basis of the museum. It is Yverdon's second museum---the first, founded in 1763, is still going strong in Yverdon's 800-year-old castle. There were 200-odd fans at the opening, all from Switzerland and France, plus yours truly. I was amazed at the quantity of sf published in languages other than English. Also, half the museum is an art gallery, featuring European artists never seen in North America. A full travel report will appear in my sixth "catalog."

'4. Tuck. I'm often asked which is"better", Versins or Tuck. There's no comparison. (Indeed, there's no comparison between any two of these encyclopedias.) My advice: The Tuck and the Versins are absolute essentials for anyone who pretends he is serious about sf. If you have some enthusiasm (and money!) left after Tuck and Versins, buy the Rynin and marvel at this forgotten first historian of sf. ARCANA is for completists only.'

***

VERSINS, Pierre - Encyclopedie de l'Utopie et de la Science Fiction 1st dj. Lausanne 1972. $71.00**

**Available from other North American dealers, and I will not sell such items until the other dealers are unable to do so. (There are too many people trying to make a buck off sf. I'm in it just for fun. This catalogue, for instance, is costing me more than I grossed from the last catalogue.) (And if you wonder why I do it, you don't understand fans!)

The following comments have been boiling up inside me for over two years. A most disgraceful pattern of unprofessional jealousy and indifference towards this book has become evident to me, and I can no longer remain silent. I have remained silent, in print at least, because I kept hoping for a thaw in the silence, because one-fan raves can be counterproductive, and because I may appear to have some vested interest in promoting the Encyclopedie: I wrote the first review of the book (basically a rave review) which Charlie Brown refused to run in LOCUS (he failed to run any review) and which Caz, bless him, ran in ERB-DOM; I was the only person in Canada who was plugging away for a Hugo for Versins, and I made a special trip to Toronto to leave a copy with the Torcon committee; I was the only realistic source of the book for North Americans and Britons for a year---and I imported copies only after I suggested to various dealers that they stock copies, and was turned down by each one; and I have been asked by three people, including Versins, to do an English translation. I also wrote a second review, at the request of Waldemar Kumming, which is one of only two reviews in German, and the only rave reviewin that language. I want to stress again, that, as I say on the first page of this catalog, I am a fan only: I attempt to make no money in any of my fan activities, whether as a dealer, writer, or publisher. I am willing to name people to whom I have refused to fill orders and to whom I returned money for orders for the Versins and other (**) books on this list, and I am willing to name publishing projects I have relinquished to professionals who had better use for profits than I had for losses---on request by letter. I have no business naming names in print here.

Let me state at the start that I have the highest regard for the works of such people as Sam Moskowitz, Gerry de la Ree, and Jacques Sadoul, who are guilty in varying degrees of ignoring Versins. In chronological order, the first hint that fans were not the cosmically-minded creatures I had

always assumed they were came when Charlie Brown failed to run any review of the ENCYCLOPEDIE. Don Wolheim and I independently wrote to LOCUS about this book, and I suspect that if it hadn't been for Don, Charlie would have ignored the book altogether. (Don has spent a total of 30 minutes with Versins; I have exchanged a few brief letters with the legendary recluse of Switzerland. Both of us were promoting quality, not a friend.) The most shameful episode occurred next, when the Torcon committee refused to give Versins a Hugo. When I pressed them for an explanation I got an immediate "but the book is in French!" That was the most unreal moment in my life. Not only was a body that called itself "World" doing this, but in a country where French is an official, legal language. (The officials of the World Series Little League recently changed the rules so that the damn foreigners, like those in Japan and Okinawa, who had won seven of the last eight cha-pionships, could no longer compete in the finals. No, they didn't change the name, just the rules. It depresses me to realize that some so-called fans are guilty of such narrow-mindedness.) Sam Moskowitz has verbally dismissed the book, but he can't even read it! (I sight-translated some passages for him.) Jacques Sadoul, in his HISTOIRE in late 1973 made a wildly outrageous denunciation of Versins, and in response to criticism from Versins, myself, and perhaps others, softened his denunciation in the 1974 edition: now it is merely outrageous. The Versins book towers physically and intellectually over the Sadoul. Versins discusses sf across national and language barriers, in all its forms in all times. Sadoul, who doesn't qualify the title of his HISTOIRE as to countries and languages, deals only with the Anglo-Saxon and French-speaking worlds. Gerry de la Ree put out a booklet of illuminated letters, claiming it was the first of its kind. I pointed out to Gerry that not only does theENCYCLOPEDIE have a better set of illuminated letters, but it has an entry on the subject (Letterines) which mentions even earlier examples. The real irony here is that Gerry is one of the dealers who flatly refused to stock the book. When Schuyler Miller reviewed Tuck [part 1] in ANALOG and made a reference to the Versins that showed he hadn't seen it, I wrote him and urged him to take a look. In the time between the writing of that review and the receipt of my letter he had purchased the Versins and written a review of it which he expected to see printed in due course. Ben Bova did not run it because, as he told me, Versins is of in terest to specialized scholars only. But Versins champions the very sf ANALOG is famous for: straight, hard sf. Versins defines his subject matter as "conjectures romanesques rationelles", rational romantic fiction, and does not "pad" his book with entries for non-df people like Tolkien, as popular as such an action might be, nor with second rate American and other sf writers. I sold 23 copies of the Versins to a wide range of people, from neo-fans to long-time scholars, to people who could read rench and to people who could not. And at least two people told me of it being stolen off college library bookshelves in record time.

I mentioned Don Tuck. His encyclopedia is a whole different kettle of fish. He basically "just" lists books of interest to people whose concern is sf by Anglo-Saxons and/or sf available in English. Versins has written a true encyclopedia: while he does list books, the majority of the verbiage is in essay form. I refuse to rate one encyclopedia over the other: both are essential labors of love to all sf students. The point of mentioning Tuck is that he is an old correspondent and friend. I think he deserves a special Hugo, too, yet I am not going to campaign in his behalf: he, being English, has his boosters. I prefer to spend what energy I have on an underdog who is equally deserving, and who has written a more ambitious book. (Don is a Good Guy in the boosting of Versins; he independently of me advertised and sold the Versins in Australia and New Zealand.)

If you are wondering who the hell Bruce Robbins is, well, I'm just a fan. I've been in fandom fifteen years and I expect I'll be a student of sf all my life. I have never restricted my attention to one language ---my interests outside of English language sf are primarily in German and French language material. I, for example, was reading Lem years before anyone was saying a word about him in English. I never joined the Lem bandwagon for the simple reason that I don't like his work. But I read everything Franz Rottensteiner and others say as to why I should like Lem---I'm always willing to learn.

There are many reasons why Versins has made a quantum leap in sf scholarship, and why I don't expect any one other person to match his acheivement, at least anyone I know. The criterian that eliminates the most potential candidates is linguistic ability. With linguistic ability we have only Franz Rottensteiner, Darko Suvin, and Pierre Versins. Franz has published an encyclopedic quantity of first-rate material on sf: I have never put all my copies of QUARBER MERKUR into one pile, but if I did I would have over 2,000 lehal-sized pages, over twice the lemgth of Versins. QM, despite being mimeographed, maintains a high standard of professional academic quality. Franz is aso a professional editor and agent. I eagerly await his SCIENCE FICTION BOOK from Seabury, but its projected length of 200 pages will not allow the wide-ranging sweep of Versins. Darko Suvin is the most brilliant man in sf---but he has never been a fan and he is the model of the cautious, serious academic---he gets furious when I refer to SCIENCE FICTION STUDIES as a fanzine, as if his purpose was very much different in kind than that of self-admitted fanzines. Darko knows and understands sf that is totally alien to me---Lem and other Eastern European and Slavic writers. He very likely has a Versins-sized quantity of observations about sf yo relate to us, but I can't imagine him sitting down and spilling his guts for five years. He'll continue on his own cautious, careful way. Versins has been a fan---he has published fanzines in English, and has been active in various European countries as well---and wrote his ENCYCLOPEDIE as a labor of love---he has made no money from it, and probably never will. It took five gruelling years to merely write it. Versins is a self-admitted failed professional writer---he quotes another's observation: "Versins knows everything about science fiction, except how to write it." As a result, he wrote his ENCYCLOPEDIE in a fuck-the-critics style. It is a simple, yet arrogant style that most Americans and English Canadians can rea- after two years of typical college French. The style drives academics to distraction, but I love it. Versins has nothing to hide and exposes his material in a straightforward manner. Another positive aspect of Versins is his reclusiveness---he's too busy enjoying sf to worry about an image. He's indifferent to my ravings on his behalf. The real students of sf and the truly curious will read him; he knows this and is satisfied.

Obviously I recommend this tome. It is available from many professional dealers. Anyone who proposes to write about "science fiction", with no qualifications, must read and study this book. The latest would-be historian to make a fool of himself is Brian Aldiss---it makes no difference that I enjoyed BILLION YEAR SPREE to the extent of buying both the U.S. and British hardcovers, snd that I share Brian's fascination with FRANKENSTEIN as a seminal work of sf (see my last two issues of PARADOX) ---the point is, he calls his book "the true history of science fiction" and resorts to the sheerest tokenism in considering non-English language sf. Jacques van Herp, for example, considers the true origins of sf to be in Continental European literature in the second half of the 19th century. This view must be reconciled with that of Aldiss.

I have no news to report. The companion volume with the much needed index is still in preparation. Any English translation will most likely be in several volumes, at least two or three years away.

***

La Maison d'Ailleurs Opens

BY BRUCE ROBBINS

On May 1, 1976, the world's first science fiction museum opened. Its name is Maison d'Ailleurs ("House of Elsewhere") and it's to be found in Yverdon, Switzerland. It's the second museum in Yverdon---the first was founded in 1763 and is still going strong in the 8---year-old castle located one block from the Maison d' Ailleurs. Considering the level-headedness of the Swiss, the truly working democracy that is Switzerland, and the peace that Switzerland has been able to keep internally by remaining strong but not beligerant, this new museum has as good a prospect as any to survive the future. And that's a damn good thing, because the museum's holdings represent the most important science fiction collection in the world. The books, records, posters, fanzines, comics, games, toys, necklaces, stamps, artwork, etc. are the former property of Pierre Versins and Martine Thome, and Pierre Versins himself is the curator. To wander among all these goodies is to peer inside the head of Pierre Versins, and some biographical data on this incredible man must be mentioned.

Pierre Versins was born in France in 1923. Pierre Versins is not his real name---the "information" in the third edition of Jacques Sadoul's HISTOIRE as to Versins' real identity is wrong---and I will not reveal the truth here. It's what he's done that counts. Versins was active in the French underground in World War Two, was captured by the Nazis, and survived not one but three concentration camps. He was force-marched to one, tortured at another, and put in the ovens at another. Alphabetically, the three were Auschwitz, Buchenwold, and Flossenberg. I was too horror-struck to be bothered to write down or memorize the exact, ghoulish details and their proper chronological order as I read the personal clippings Versins was kind enough to let me read. As someone who earns his living juggling mortality statistics for an insurance company I could work up the astronomical odds of surviving the hell Versins went through. But I won't. The least ghoulish incident is how Versins survived the ovens: Versins' group was naked and waiting for the gas when something jammed. By the time the gas was able to flow properly, the Nazis, with their perverse sense of punctuality, saw that the time allotted for Versins' group had passed and hustled his group out and the next group in.

The scene switches to 1948 and Switzerland. The Swiss had allowed victims of Hitler to recuperate at special camps, and to remain in Switzerland. It wasn't until 1948 that Versins could function as a human being. (Versins turned 25 in 1948. What had you done by your 25th birthday?) Versins decided to spend the rest of his life doing one thing. Was it to become a vengeful, world-famous Nazi-hunter? A super Kurt Vonnegut? An outspoken religious fanatic? None of these. He decided to devote his life to the study of science fiction. He believes that only in science fiction can he find Answers. While others keep shouting (mostly to one another) he believes science fiction is the only relevant literature. Versins has quietly lived that truth. Among his accomplishments over the years that are worth mentioning:

1. His fanzine AILLEURS (1956-1967 with resumed publication promised for the near future) considered by Jacques Sadoul as the best fanzine ever published in French, and a strong contender, in my opinion, as the best fanzine ever. It is also the only trilingual fanzine I have ever read.

2. His radio show "Passeport pour l'Inconnu" which has been going since 1957 on Radio Geneva.

3. His sf pavilion at the 1970 edition of the permanent world exhibition in Montreal, the first such pavilion at any world's fair.

4. His truly mind-boggling ENCYCLOPEDIE, the most important book about sf ever written, and unlikely to be surpassed. Versins has read more sf in more languages than anyone I know. Add to that his motivation and the fact that he spends 100% of his time on sf (reading it, translating it, dramatising it, writing it, writing about it, collecting it, etc. etc.). Before Yverdon decided to create a second museum in 1975, Versins literally would go without food for days rather than break up his collection. I have never heard of anyone with such dedication to sf!

Most people reading this have heard of Pierre Versins only through my writings. Versins spends no time promoting sf (or himself) to us True Believers. He "preaches" to the general public, especially the Swiss public. The publisher of his ENCYCLOPEDIE, L'Age d'Homme, is not, as I once suspected, a creation of Pierre Versins, but rather a thoroughly mundane Swiss publisher, with balls. Versins is serious about sf only in print. He refuses to engage in serious long-winded discussions of sf---his speech to officially open the museum to the 200-odd fans in attendance being a perfect example.

Of the fans in attendance, all were from Switzerland and France, except myself. Among those who were not there, but wrote to say they wished they were, are Jacques Sadoul, Jean-Baptiste Baromian, Maxim Jakubowski, Demetre Ioakimidis, Brian Aldiss, Eugene Moineau, and Valeria Privi Carini. This is not an attempt at name-dropping---there are few people who would know all those names!---but one way of emphasizing the fact that there is a hell of a body of sf outside the English language that is all but ignored by us Anglophones. One point that was made to me by more than one of the European fans was that Europe was the capital of sf. These European fans know everything worth knowing about English language sf, and much more! (Remember the NEWSWEEK with the special section on sf about a year ago? The European edition of NEWSWEEK chucked the cover photo of Gerald Ford and made that article the cover story!)

The museum is everything I expected it to be, and more. One room devoted to artwork, which is changed every month. The most complete collection of European sf in the world. Everything that's worth reading in English. (I saw English language editions of Lovecraft and Howard I had never before seen in all my years of collecting.) And the oldest sf books I have ever seen---the first edition of Cyrano (1657), the first illustrated edition of NILS KLIM (1745), the only known copy of a 1759 edition of CANDIDE---some with letters offering to buy for fabulous sums.

I obviously think this is a place worth visiting and revisiting. The exact address is:

Maison d'Ailleurs
5 rue du Four
CH 1400
Yverdon,
SWITZERLAND

But all you really have to remember is the name of the town. Once you're there any local can tell you the way. You can also donate material and money if you are so inclined, but let's be honest; there's no sense donating if you can't enjoy the museum. Visit the place first, and when you have exhausted yourself looking at all the materials, think about the several tons of books that are packed away awaiting the day when more bookshelves can be purchased. And while you are awaiting your next trip to Europe, don't forget that Forry Ackerman has a collection worth supporting, and Versins' expenses are peanuts compared to Ackerman's.

***

BRUCE ROBBINS address is:

BRUCE ROBBINS
P.O. Box 396
Station B
Montreal H3B 3J7
CANADA

****

LIES, ALL LIES

DEUS IRAE, an ambitious collaboration by Philip K. Dick and Roger Zelazny (Doubleday, $5.95), is...beyond me on the religious level, beyond the obvious ironic ending that shows the lies that buttress and often foundation the faiths men live by. There is a great deal of comment, self-questioning, trotting out of believer/non-believer perspectives and psychology. There is erudition. On one level I'm respectful, and on another I mutter, "Christ, this sort of thing has been thrashed out again and again and again for eons. Why again? Why do these two heavy science fictional talents feel the need to restate the obvious, to retread this old, old tire.?"

I'll grant they do it very well, in the body of a fascinating pilgrimage by one Tibor McMasters, an armless, legless painter in the post-Smash world of extreme mutants and isolated small cities in North America. He is on a journey to find and photograph (for a church mural he is painting in Charlottesville, Utah) the face of the worshipped God of Wrath--a still living man named Carleton Lufteufel, former head of ERDA, the man who gave the order to drop the Bombs...

The still hanging-on Christian Church is interested in discrediting the ascendant God, and Tibor has a friend/enemy tracking him...There is a hunter out to find and kill the God ...There are the strange mutants Tibor meets on the way...The Goulart-like robots and computors (time and shortages have addled their brains)...

It should be noted that Tibor is traveling on a specially made cart pulled by a cow, and that he has powered mechanical arms.

There is hope and redemption for mankind at the end, a spiritual unbeat, caused by...well, ambiguity raises its fuzzy head for me here. I was taken aback by the ghost of Lufteufel and by the fantasy science. The novel is science fiction only because of its label and its use of standard sf furniture. But sf has many corners, and why not one marked Spiritual SF? Robert Silverberg is not the only one who can write this variety.

There are sections which show the hand of Phil Dick, and sections which betray the strong style of Roger Zelazny. (I particularly liked the satirical mutated human 'bugs' who worship their god named Veedoubleyou. There are many pranks like that.)

I don't know if this is a good book or not. It's sure as hell different, and it kept me reading (with raised eyebrows, but with interest). It has something for everybody but the hard science types.

---REG

****

LETTER FROM PIERS ANTHONY

August 15, 1976

'Dear Alter,

I'm addressing this to you because Richard E. Geis will never print it. He doesn't even know the meaning of his name. Here I was, drowning my sorrows after having just discovered that the novel I sold to Elwood last year, BUT WHAT OF EARTH?, is being published as a collaboration with Buck Coulson---I only learned that by having my agent send a registered return-receipt letter to verify that the novel was going to be published at all---well, Coulson is a fine fellow, but I have had no correspondence with him this past year, and the novel I delivered to Elwood was complete and publishable as it stood. Seems Elwood wanted some changes in it, and wanted Coulson to do these changes, so I said okay, here is the rope, and well, I think I'll have to sick my agent back on him with a copy of the contract, because this must be - unique "collaboration" in law as well as in moot. I am really afraid to see what has been done to the novel, now. Funny thing is that once Elwood asked me to do a really major galactic-scope SF adventure on par with Asimov's FOUNDATION trilogy, so I thought about it and said, what the hell, why not try?, and sent him a 17,000 word presentation on the Cluster trilogy designed precisely to his specs---and he bounced it. So I sold it to Avon instead, and am now doing second draft on the concluding novel; the overall trilogy runs about 350,000 words, the most ambitious adventure of my career. So this may represent a neat example: what one writer can do with Elwood, and what he can do without Elwood, both projects having been designed for Elwood, and both based on the same background framework.

'Anyway, here I was relaxing by reading in SFR about Lester del Rey's opinions on fantasy---and I have just completed first draft of a 100,000-plus word fantasy for del Rey, too---and admiring the little T. Kirk column headings featuring "Thingworld" and "Macaroniscope" and think how this Alan Burt Akers, who sounds like Michael Moorcock maybe, *((Nope))* remarks on new SF writers of the 60's being bowled over by praise to their destruction, and making an odds-on bet that he was not thinking of two 60's new writers named Niven and Anthony---and reading about the Geis wood stove, which interests me because I am about to build a house in the backwoods Florida forest and shall use wood stoves, solar heating, gardens and such along with my bicycles---my home life resembles REG's more than is comfortable---and about his new good-woman companion, and abruptly I run into this querie about my use of the word "geis" in OMNIVORE, p. 146 of the British (and Avon) edition. Sigh. Okay; the word is used correctly and spelled correctly, and it appears in the Oxford English Dictionary (not in the main edition, but in the supplement at the end), so my British fans can go to the library and verify it for themselves. I was born in England, you know, so these things matter. But the main dictionary I use is the one I got for my tenth or eleventh birthday, a 1913 Funk & Wagnalla (no, I wasn't ten in 1913, I got it second hand in 1944 or 1945) that remains the best one extant. So I present to you its definition entire:

> "GEIS, geasa pl. An obligation of honor, generally restrictive, attaching to a rank, order or individual in the ancient Irish aristocracy."

You can see that this definitely is the same Geis, who as a dirty old man must have been born around 1913 and is by now quite rank and in need of restriction. Not to be confused with the next entry,

> "GEISHA, A Japanese girl especially trained to furnish entertainment at convivial and social gatherings, by her posturing, dancing and playing."

That of course is not Geis, but his companion. Geis, Geisha, a matched set. (This is a public service, educational announcement; as I said, Geis seems to be ignorant of the ramifications of his own name.) My big dictionary, the very soul of helpfulness, goes on to proffer some good advice for Geis and Geisha, in the form of a literary quote:

> "Every man who entered the Fenian ranks had four geasa laid upon him, 'The first never to receive a portion with a wife, but to choose her for good manners and virtues; the second, never to offer violence to any woman; the third, never to refuse anyone for anything he might possess; the fourth, that no single warrior should ever flee before nine [i.e., before less than ten] champions.'"

All of which suggests the following maxim: Speak softly, but carry a big dick(tionary). Maybe next issue of SFR, Geis will inform us all exactly what goes on within the Fenian ranks; maybe it is an apa. At any rate, now you know exactly what I meant by the reference in OMNIVORE.'

((Alter-Ego here. Geis insists his name is German and means...goat. I suspect that's the truth, judging from some of his past behavior.

((I suspect the Laser contract gives them the right to edit (add, subtract, alter...even unto major revision) once they own the ms. I wonder how the royalties are split?))

****

****

LETTER FROM JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

August 20, 1976

Looks like Darrel Schweitzer is slowly taking over SFR. In enjoy his interviews very much, but think his reviews are too cutting, too subjective, and too holier-than-thou. I think I'll skip reading his reviews for a while; twice he kept me from purchasing books I discovered later to be very worthwhile. I'd like to see him do articles instead, which can be as subjective as all hell and very entertaining and rude without posing as the final decision in a matter.

Exciting news in my editing projects: a contract with TK-Graphics to produce as huge (75 to 90 thousand word) anthology of essays regarding feminist issues in fantasy and sf (not exactly up your alley, but nothing you should scorn). The collection will be written mostly by women, but men aren't excluded entirely. I'm a bit of a reactionary sexist, but not so much so that I absolutely refuse to believe guys might have something to offer in womens' studies. I've asked Denys Howard to cover the effeminist point of view, and Black author Charles Saunders is doing an essay on racism in sf&f which is at least allegorical of sexism, and I should get a query off to Tiptree attempting to wheedle something out of him. Those are the token males amidst the batch. Ain'tcha proud of me? Hope you're not disappointed in my not asking you to contribute...If you think it worth mentioning in SFR as a market, I'm paying $10 on acceptance for articles two to five thousand words, $20 for longer pieces, $5 for reprints.

Am finishing up an anthology of art, fiction, articles and verse called ORCHARDS OF WONDER, doing the layout myself, to be published by Stellar Z in Florida. Will ask that you be on the review list though you may think it too fannish for review. I sold a short story to MYRRDIN for $26 and am excited.

Noted that FOOD FOR THE GODS was listed in Variety as one of the top ten money grossing movies last month. But so was WILLARD years ago. From everything I've heard, the movie is poorly acted with bad special effects Went to see LOGAN'S RUN, one or two nice special effects in the whole long dre ry movie, and even those two spots will be lost on the small screen. Peter Ustinof was the only interesting character. Box was a close second, though Box was pretty dumb. Doesn't say much for the movie, does it. THE OMEN has me suckered in, however. I think it is excellent. Saw it twice. Astounding special effects, believable acting on the part of the child who plays the son of the anti-christ, and Gregory Peck uses his face to replace a million words of dialogue. The biggest thing though is the mood. Ever see a whole audience shrink down under the seats? No kidding, with each successive scene, the audience grew shorter. The plot is not unique, but well conceived. THE TENANT is unique, and grisly. Not one I could see again, too tedious, but one only intelligent film of the recent spate of fantasy and sf. Saw NOAH'S ARK, produced by Mormons. Can you imagine Noah with a hick prairie accent? The film is a good joke. Makes Van Danikin sound wise. The sad thing is that any fool could come up with a convincing argument in favor of the Ark theory--but the Mormons couldn't. (My blood-brother is a Latter Day Saint; he has to put up with prejudiced statements like that all the time).

****

LETTER FROM HARRY WARNER

July 15, 1976

'It's not strictly appropos of Science Fiction Review, aside from my mention of the topic in the loc in the 17th issue. But maybe you haven't heard that I've apparently found a new publisher for the history of fandom in the 1950's. Joe D. Siclari has tackled it. He plans to do it backward from the way Advent handled All Our Yesterdays, producing a cheap memeographed edition first and a hardbound, printed book later. He is trying to get the cheap edition finished in time to peddle it at MidAmeriCon.

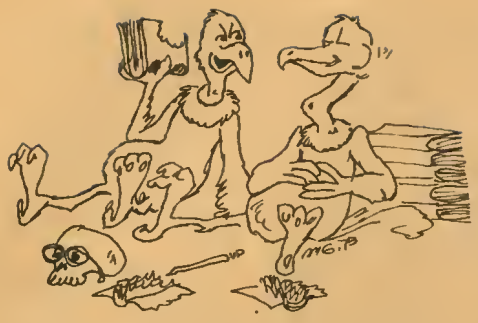
'Freff's material in this issue reinforces my belief that non-artists shouldn't be expected to say much about art in their locs. The artists can do it so well, through their practising knowledge of the subject, that people who can't draw are licked before they start as art critics. Come to think of it, maybe this accounts in large part for the lamentable condition of mundane art criticism in professional publications. Much of it is written by people who got interested in art because they had the mistaken belief that they were capable of drawing and painting. Freff has an ability to paint word pictures that is nearly as imposing as his non-word pictures. I won't forget his description of the Apollo-Soyuz artists' tour. Matter of fact, it made me remember the first time my journalistic work brought me to a talk by a real celebrity. Herbert Hoover spoke at a nearby college and I was assigned to cover it. (He wasn't president at the time. I'm not that old yet.) There I was, my eyes popping in excitement, and there were all the other reporters from press services and big cities, ignoring the former president, chattering incessantly among themselves, while one of them, who apparently had lost a coin toss or something, followed the talk as he looked at the advance copy, so he could yell at the rest of the press if Hoover departed from his text.

'I liked George Martin's Killerbowl review. Not only are sports moving away from violence. Most of the violence that is publicized today is hokum. You hear hockey announcers on television screaming about the hard checks and the fights. Most of the impact is minimized by the fact that the players are on skates and the skates are on ice, which acts like the oil in your engine to prevent the serious sort of damage. Football players are so padded that the punch-throwing which occasionally breaks out after a play is meaningless.

' My only genuine criticism of SFR is the minimal amount of reviewing by you. I liked it better when a page or two by you alternated with material by others from start to finish of each issue.'

****

'The concept of narcissism provides us not with a ready-made psychological determinism but with a way of understanding the psychological impact of recent social changes--assuming that we bear in mind not only its clinical origins but the continuum between pathology and normalcy. It provides us, in other words, with a tolerably accurate portrait of the "liberated" personality of our time: of his charm, of his pseudo-awareness of his own condition, his promiscuous pansexuality, his fascination with oral sex, his fear of the castrating mother (Mrs. Portnoy), his hypocondria, his protective shallowness, his avoidance of dependence, his inability to mourn, his dread of old age and death.' ---Christopher Lasch



REG NOTE: Larry Niven sent the following ms. with a note which reads (partially): 'I enclose a gift. "The Notebooks of Mack Sikes" appeared in the SFWA FORUM but has since been revised. ... You already know how much I enjoy SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. If you'd like to publish the "Notebooks" please feel free.'

I feel very free.

THE NOTEBOOKS OF MACK SIKES
BY LARRY NIVEN

"No conflict, no story," says my friend and Sarge. Then he yells across the room, "Hey, Larry! See that six-foot-tall white rabbit over there?"

"Yeah?"

"Curtain!"

Or, "Hey, Hamlet! The King murdered your father and married your mother. What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing."

"Curtain!"

A rare publishing event has brought this old party routine suddenly to mind.

Harvey McIlroy Sikes turned to science fiction in the 1930s. His work, spanning three decades, is noted more for quantity than for quality; but the pulp magazines were always hungry for material. Now, at last, Mack Sikes' estate has permitted us to publish these excerpts from his notebooks. Sikes' fans may derive some enjoyment from these dozen-odd plot summations of stories that Sikes somehow never got around to writing.

CLAN

Tale of Johnny Foss, a young Clan brother in search of his people. The Clan mutants have long since gone into hiding from the vengeful jealousy of the unchanged, numerically superior humans. Characteristic of the mutation are: tiny black tendrils to be found near the roots of a Clan's typically blond hair; slightly lowered intelligence; and a greatly enhanced sex drive.

YOU, ROBOT

Adam Asimov, the world's first intelligent robot, is accused of murdering its creator. In its cell the robot prints out a full confession, then hangs itself using a thick steel cable. This allows the robot's defense lawyer to get the robot off on a plea of insanity.

BLANKENSTEIN

Victor Blankenstein, a young and half-mad physician, is obsessed with the ambition to create a man. He spends years procuring parts of dead bodies, joining then into a giant humanoid form. Finished, he subjects the creature to a combination of lightning and man-made electricity. Unfortunately, the composit body does not respond. It continues to decay, while enraged villagers converge on Blankenstein's laboratory, screaming about "health hazards".

BRAVE NEW WHIRL

A savage raised in primitive conditions is introduced, without preparation, into the civilization of a thousand years from now. Within forty years he has killed himself through overindulgence.

1985

Benevolent dictatorship threatens to become anarchy when the dictator, known only as Big Brother, is stricken with hysterical blindness. Was it something he saw? While society disintegrates outside the Ministry of Truth, heroic doctors try to cure the dictator's blindness through highly imaginative forms of shock therapy.

MARINA

Two warring races ready themselves for the epic battle that will exterminate one race and will probably leave the other too nearly destroyed to survive. A third force intervenes. One Outsider and one human find themselves marooned on an alien world, separated by an invisible barrier. A telepathic voice tells them they must settle the war in single combat.

Unable to reach each other, the combatants agree to settle their differences in a game of multi-lingual Scrabble.

NIGHTFALLING

On a world within a multiple star system, night falls only once in three thousand years, when all the suns are on one side of the planet. As the sky darkens and the stars begin to emerge, everybody goes to bed.

THE COLD MATHEMATICS

A girl stows away on a spacecraft carrying strickly limited fuel. Her extra mass will mean that the ship has insufficient fuel to land. She must be ejected, and quickly. Fortunately nobody likes her very much.

TAU TEENY

A spacecraft carrying several hundred humans and all the requirements of a prefab colony, finds itself marooned at the edge of lightspeed when the brakes on its Bussard ramjet drive burn out. Their only hope is to drive the ship to ever higher velocities, building up the time dilation effect to give themselves extra time to think of something. Fortunately they are rescued by a passing faster-than-light ship built several decades later.

THE LEFT HAND OF BENNY

The Winzers are a nearly human race, differing from the humans of other worlds in one important respect. They spend most of their time as neuters. At rare intervals they may become male or female, unpredictably.

Benny Hai is chosen as ambassador to the Winzers because of his very similar life style. They get along fine.

GRALLDEN

Some unnamed disaster has plunged the city of Bellokta into anarchy. Hero enters Bellokta, explores without any special purpose in mind, learns nothing, and eventually wanders out again.

Sikes seems to have chosen this loose plot framework as an opportunity to publish almost a million words of scenes and notes from unfinished stories. Publishers saw things differently, and he never sold it.

THE ROADS MUST STROLL

Study of a nationwide strike of the Slidewalk Repairmen's Union. Chaos reigns as airline passengers must walk to the luggage depots.

TOURIST IN A STRANGE LAND

Michael Valentine Wisowaty, raised from birth by Martians, is brought at age twenty-one to Greenwich Village, founds a new religion based on polygamy. Martians believe he has gone native.

BUG NORMAN SPINRAD

Talk show host, driven insane by inane and stupid phone calls night after night, falls prey to delusions of grandeur and persecution.

MISSTEP OF GRAVITY

Mekzlin: a massive world with a tremendous rotation rate---once in twenty-one minutes---and a surface gravity that varies from 3G at the distended equator, to 800G at the poles. An exploring ship makes the tragic mistake of landing at the pole. Ships's robots must somehow scrape the remains of the crew out of the circuitry before the ship sags into a disk.

****

ACCIDENTAL ECOLOGY DEPT.

'It is estimated that malaria will arrive as a major epidemic in Europe within the next ten years, thanks to the decision by Germany and France to build atomic generators that utilize river waters for their cooling systems and hence bring the water temperature within the range in which anopheles breeds.

--Ivan Illich, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY
May, 1976.

****

LETTER FROM LYNNE HOLDOM

6-1-76

'I recently got a job in a bookstore, and sales of SF bear out yours and Alter's position. Sword & Sorcery sells very well---mostly but not exclusively to high school students. The standard authors---Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov, LeGuin---sell well also, but the champ here is Larry Niven. Also, LORD OF THE RINGS will always sell.

'But I started getting in some books I like---Bradley books, natch, but also Brackett, the Deryni trilogy, Piper, and other borderline SF/fantasy...and boy do they sell. Pfeil's THROUGH THE REALITY WARP sold very well and it's mediocre slam-bang space opera. This is what people want.

'Down books don't sell well. Silverberg doesn't sell that well. DYING INSIDE sold less well than any of the other Ballantine releases for Feb. except STELLAR-2 and anthologies never sell very well. Fen know what they want and down novels aren't it.

'I think Watergate has drained people. Nixon-related books sell like mad. Why worry about David Selig destroying himself ((in DYING INSIDE)) when you can read about Nixon doing the same? Also, I wish Farmer would finish that third Riverworld novel ((he has)) and that McCaffrey would write the third Dragon novel. We get a lot of requests for both. I hear someone is starting a DRAGONWORLD fanzine. Maybe that'll do it.

'There are only three Laser books I'd recommend since last time---THE HORDE by Green, TO RENEW THE AGES by Robert Coulson, and THEN BEGGARS COULD RIDE by Nelson. A LAW FOR THE STARS by Morressy is interesting and shows promise.

'Stay well and keep Alter happy. His nastyness should be preserved for the ages. I recommended BLAKE'S PROGRESS to a friend who liked it, too.'

((I'm sure Bob Silverberg just winced and cursed. David Selig did not 'destroy himself' in DYING INSIDE. His talent for telepathy was dying and his agony of alienation was finally ended. He couldn't cope with his ability, refused (or was unable) to take advantage of it, and was far better off without it. What most readers found disagreeable was his lack of self-interest and his failure to exploit his wild talent. I cried "Fool!" to him dozens of times. But, nevertheless, a very well-written novel...because it did provoke those strong reactions.))

****

THE LASER'S EDGE

LEGACY
By J. F. Bone [Laser #18]

SPACE TRAP
By Juanita Coulson [Laser #20]

BIRTH OF FIRE
By Jerry Pournelle [Laser #23]

Reviewed By Lynne Holdom

Every so often amid the junk and botched first efforts of beginning writers, Laser does publish some novels worth reading even if they are not quite science fiction classics. LEGACY, SPACE TRAP, and BIRTH OF FIRE are three such good books. Of course Pournelle, Bone and Coulson are hardly beginners.

LEGACY is a novel that two decades ago would have been set on Mars----a Mars with canals, dead sea bottoms, a mysterious long-dead native civilisation, Earthmen who have adapted to the planet and become decadent, more recent arrivals who must live in domed settlements, and all sorts of half-castes and assorted low-life.

Since this is 1976, it is set on Arthe at the far end of the galaxy and Sam Williams, a doctor who has been disfigured in battle, is sent there by mistake. Once there he can either try to unravel reams of red tape (a process that could take years) or get a job and earn the money to travel to his real destination. He becomes an undercover police agent tracking down dealers in tonocaine---a drug that makes heroin look like aspirin---but sets up as a slum doctor to gain the trust of the half-castes and drifters. Soon he is off to another domes settlement, travelling among the more decadent canal dwellers and is almost offered as a human sacrifice in the mysterious pre-human Arthean ruins. He soon discovers that he must know more about the drug traffic than he realises consciously but he always wonders what the drug dealers want to accomplish as the monetary rewards don't seem to justify the risks. Are the dealers mere sadists who like to see human misery? The ending is a bit predictable but, other than that, I'd recommend this as fine action-adventure.

SPACE TRAP isn't as good as LEGACY but does have some points of interest. It is basically a first-contact story which reads more like a well-written juvenile than an adult novel.

Ken Farrell, a cadet, is assigned to survey, along with Zachary, an experienced pilot. They check out planet NE 592 which isn't supposed to be resurveyed for years yet. When they crash on the planet they discover telepathic humanoid aliens and some Earthmen who have stolen a ship and settled the planet to get back to nature and the simple farming life. Neither group is native to the planet; both arrived at about the same time; neither is willing to trust the other group as both have had some bad experiences. Farrell and Zachary cannot even get a message back to Earth. Everyone is stuck on the planet. There are no easy solutions. The writing does get a bit sticky at times but at its best is thought-provoking.

BIRTH OF FIRE reminded me of Heinlein's juveniles, possibly because Pournelle, like Heinlein, is very concerned with the meanings of freedom.

The setting is that of a Mars in revolt against Earth, another familiar Heinlein theme. The novel chronicles the coming-of-age of Garr Pittson, ex juvenile delinquent turned Marsman, and his role in the rebellion. During the novel Pournelle gets off some shots at the justice system, affirmative action and certain university types who think that preserving the ecology intact is more important than making life bearable for people. Laser may have bowdlerized the language but it is more earthy and realistic than that of STARSHIP TROOPERS or REVOLT IN 2100. Science fiction has changed in the last twenty years. I'd recommend this book to anyone though it hardly ranks with Pournelle's best.

****

LETTER FROM JACK DANN

16 August 76

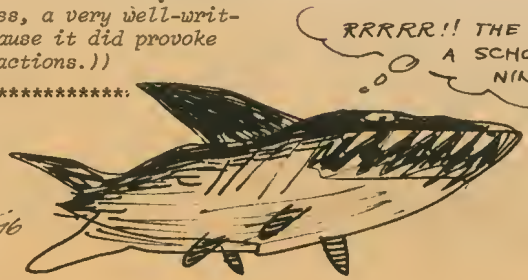
'In your review of the 50th Anniversary issue of AMAZING, you quote from my novella, STARHIKER, to give the reader an idea of my style. Unfortunately, there's a typo---"conceived by intelligent intellect" should read "conceived by intellect."

'Gave me quite a scare, sent me back to the magazine, whereupon I breathed a sigh of relief: intelligent intellect is a bit much...even for me.'

((My apologies, Jack. As I recall, Alter=Ego was using the machine the day your let---

(("No you don't, Geis! You're the one who screwed up that typing! Dammit, I get blamed for everything!"))

****



LETTER FROM LEIGH BRACKETT

14 August 76

'In re Lynne Holdom's warning that THE STARMEN OF LLYRDIS (Ballantine) is a reprint of an old Ace double, GALACTIC BREED. It isn't... quite. The Ace version was only 40,000 words as against 60,000, and the first couple of chapters were considerably messed with. The Ballantine version is in fact a reprint of the original Gnome Press hardback, THE STARMEN.

'All best from both of us...we read SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW from cover to cover, and thoroughly enjoy it.'

AND ON THE SAME MATTER:

LETTER FROM JUDY-LYNN DEL REY
SENIOR EDITOR, BALLANTINE BOOKS

August 23rd, 1976

'Re: Lynne Holdom's "helpful" warning in SFR #18.

'The true pedigree of THE STARMEN OF LLYRDIS is as follows:

First published as THE STARMEN OF LLYRDIS in STARTLING STORIES (March, 1951).

Then published in hardcover as THE STARMEN by Gnome Press (1952).

Afterwhich Ace published a shorter version THE GALACTIC BREED as one-half of a Double.

Ballantine published the original Gnome Press version in 1976 under Leigh's original title THE STARMEN OF LLYRDIS.

'Our aim was not to confuse readers but to return a fine novel to its proper form and title. It's a shame your correspondent Holdom was not aware of the full publishing history of the book.'

((Thanks to you both for the background and perspective. I doubt Lynne was reading s-f in the 50's.))

****

LYNNE HOLDOM: THREE REVIEWS

THE SHATTERED CHAIN
By Marion Zimmer Bradley
DAW UW1229, $1.50

In all of Bradley's previous Darkover novels, Darkover has always seemed to be an extremely masculine world. Women are either married off young (with or without their consent) or secluded in Towers as sequestered virgins. As a woman I found both roles unsatisfying and I am hardly a rampant feminist as THE FEMALE MAN nauseated me because of its either/or philosophy

Now finally someone has written a novel that deals with women realistically and shows that they are just as capable of courage, loyalty and honor as are men. Also as incapable of these virtues---for such traits are those of individuals, not sexes.

The three main characters here are Lady Rohana Ardais, who was married to the Lord of Ardais at fifteen; her foster daughter Jaelle who has joined the Free Amazons and is considered the family scandal; and Magdelena Lorne, a Terran raised at Caer Donn and is recuperating from a broken marriage.

However Peter Haldane, Magdelena's ex husband, is kidnapped by bandits who mistake him for Kyril Ardais, Rohana's son. Since the Terran Empire lets its agents take their chances and Darkovans consider all conflicts purely kin group affairs, no one is willing to rescue Peter. Then Rohana suggests to Magdelena that she pose as a Free Amazon and ransom Peter herself. During her journey she meets Jaelle, learns that the penalty for posing as a Free Amazon is being forced to become one, and saves Jaelle's life. Thus the two become blood-sisters and go together to ransom Peter. Then Jaelle falls in love with Peter and regrets her vows for the first time as she has never felt this way for any man before.

Put this way the novel doesn't sound too great, but the real meat of the book is in the interrelationships between the characters. Magdelena and Jaelle have the same relationship as Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn or the Three Musketeers, a strange one to find between women but a true one with no more hint of homosexual attachment than would be true in such a male relationship---but men seem curiously unable to understand this. Peter Haldane is no exception to the rule. Also, Jaelle has joined the Free Amazons for all the wrong reasons: her father was a tyrant, her foster-mother was unhappy in her marriage, so Jaelle thinks of marriage as slavery. Yet Rohana cannot understand Jaelle either. When partners separate at the slightest trouble, do they ever build anything worth while? Both are partially right; it just depends upon what evils a woman is willing to live with. There is no gain without some loss. It is also the Free Amazons who are willing to deal with the Terrans despite the Comyn Council as they resent Darkovan women being judged by bar-girls and prostitutes which are the only woman Terrans ever meet. This reconciles the Empire into letting Magdelena remain with the Amazons.

My main quibble with this book is that it contains very little of the wonders of Darkover and it is not as well constructed as THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR. It does offer a good insight into the lives of women and the petty restrictions that hamper them.

###

CHANGE
By Ann Maxwell
Popular Library, $1.25

I always like to discover a new science fiction writer. The field needs all the talent it can attract. I was most eager to try this novel

which was recommended by a friend. Despite flaws, it shows a writer of definite promise, and has a realistic female character...something all too rare in this field.

The plot encompasses many familiar science-fiction themes: psi mutants hated and hunted by normal humans; first contact between humans and intelligent aliens; and a paranoid dictator who wants senseless war to further his career. Unfortunately the major flaw of the novel is the lack of integration of the various themes---all separately are well handled and each could have carried the novel by itself.

The most interesting subtheme is the development of Selina Christian from fearful psi mutant distrusting everyone and everything, to Selina Christian, human being, who is confident of her own abilities and willing to relate to others. The reader is carried every step of the way. Less well done but still good is Selina's stay with the Lucents as she learns about their culture and the threat of extinction that lies over them. The problems with the Terran dictator Tien are pure pulp. Maxwell also has a tendency to use psi abilities to get herself out of any tight spots in the plot.

If this sounds like a put down, it's not. Selina and the Lucents are fascinating enough to carry the novel. Maxwell's next novel should be something to look for.

###

THE HORDE
By Joseph Green
Laser #27, 95¢

I've come across some books by Joseph Green but none of his work really impressed me until this one. Despite some unevenness in pacing (caused perhaps by Laser's 190 page format)((or editing)) this novel presents some most unusual aliens who are still humanoid enough to be com-

prehensible though they come to this state from a vastly different direction.

Basically, both humans and Shemsi are space-faring peoples and both desire to settle the same type of planet. Both want to learn more about the other but are fearful of the risks involved.

Leo Volz and his wife Misty are one human exploring team. Misty has been captured by the Shemsi and Leo is determined to rescue her. After he rescues a Shemsi, the two travel together toward the Shemsi outpost and each learns about the other. The Shemsi don't understand sexual difference except intellectually, while Leo keeps wanting to put his companion into either the male or female role. Yet the Shemsi do seem to have three females who are Mothers and Goddesses all in one. They have ordered Misty taken to the Birth Mountain, partially to study her and partially to discover if Leo can rescue her. Their psychology is as alien as their physical development. I'll be looking for Green's work from now on. He's definitely worth reading. One last note---Green seems to be the only sf writer around who recognizes that women use contraceptives and that this could be desirable.

****

LETTER FROM K.W. JETER

August 14, 1976

'An amendment to my letter of May 15th ((In SFR #18)): for purely personal, non-literary reasons I canceled my contract with Laser Books for what was to have been #64, THE LAST WRONG NUMBER.

'I found your discussion of typefaces fascinating, and agree with you that "reading dynamics are very subtle, and the effect can be profound." However, I personally find densely-packed small type attractive. True, it can't be read and absorbed as easily and quickly, but I like rooting around in a thick, seemingly endless mass of stuff (hmm, sounds like hunting for truffles...) Even with as much good stuff as you get into SFR, I've usually zipped through the whole thing in about a half-hour. But then, I read very fast, and have very sharp, unaided eyesight, so this probably does not hold true for most of your readers.'

****

NEVER CHANGE A WINNER

MINDBRIDGE
By Joe Haldeman
St. Martin's, $8.95

Reviewed by REG

Essentially a repeat of the FOREVER WAR plot, with a slightly diferent ending. Young man joins (in this novel) the Agency for Extraterrestrial Development--from which, like the army in FOREVER WAR, recruits rarely get out alive.

But Jacque Le Favre is a survivor and lucky, and lives through perilous missions to strange new planets. He is a key man in the discovery and use of an alien organism which is a mind-bridge between people---and alien intelligences.

The alien super-race which seems intent on wiping out mankind is the "enemy". Maybe. Well, be kind to the next ant you see; give it its living space and trust that the ants will mature eventually and overcome their naked ids.

Matter transmitters are the means mankind uses to spread through the galaxy--until running into the terrifying shape-changing aliens, the L'vai.

This is a satisfying, spell-binding book; Joe uses the elements which made THE FOREVER WAR so good--honesty, realism, cynicism and idealism, much tension and a fast pace. He can write.

****

LETTER FROM MICHAEL WARD

June 16, 1976

'In your issue #17 the review of Triton by Mr. Donn Vicha (I presume Donn is a masculine name; if not, my apologies), performs such an injustice and disservice that I feel I must address myself on the novel's behalf.

'Your reviewer seems to be longing for Delany to drop his present pursuits (which Mr. Vicha calls "mental masturbation"), the exploration of loci of mind and perception (or "self") and the interfaces of these loci (communication), an area in which Delany has found new things to say, original, creative things, and devote his "great talents" to entertaining, diverting us. If we are to accept McLuhan's contention that there is no difference between entertainment and education -- they are both, essentially, information exchange -- then the commonly held conception of entertainment seems to be one of a low level of data input. In other words, it tells us things we already know, arranged in new patterns. This kind of entertainment has its advantages. It is easy, cheap and lazy.

'I would venture to say that your reviewer is really asking for his own mind to be masturbated. Masturbation has its advantages. It is easy, cheap and lazy. All it takes is an engaging fantasy. I, for one, have found intercourse, though a good deal more strenuous, and complex than masturbation, to be infinitely more satisfying.

'Mr. Vicha's review is dense with examples of easyness, cheapness and laziness. The opening paragraph, alone, can be ranked as no less than a minor masterpiece of vague prose. He mentions nothing of what he thinks about the novel, then (apparently) tries to shore up his unstated opinion by mentioning the hearsay "tried patience" of some unnamed people referring to works of Delany that are not specified. He tells us he likes Dhalgren but cannot explain why. I am of the opinion that a reviewer who can't figure out why he likes a book can't be worth much as a reviewer. If Mr. Vicha meant to imply that he liked a book that he would not consider good, the obvious conclusion is that he suffers from stupidity or bad taste. Furthermore, he makes this statement in the opening paragraph of a review of another book by the same author. It does not inspire confidence in the reviewer's opinion.

'Laziness is exemplified by contradictions. The reviewer tells us he likes a book which he later refers to as mental masturbation. In a section of the review given to a listing of Triton's highlights, Mr. Vicha calls one aspect "an uncomfortable blend of soap opera and Doctor Zhivago" and mentions excellent parodies which are boring. In another section he calls the conclusion of Triton mundane and anticlimactic, yet says elsewhere, "At this point [p. 274 in a 330 page book], what has seemed to drag on becomes a suspenseful, psychological flight." and, "...it builds on so many levels it has great power." and, "...the most chilling and realistically written exploration of inner space that can be found in science fiction if not in mainstream literature."

'Does the reviewer know Delany personally? If not, how does he justify the affrontery of (cheaply) presuming that Delany is self agonizing/analyzing and needs to free himself in order to entertain us? The only reason I can see from material in the review is that it sets him up to take a metalogical step and suggest that Delany has attempted to spell out his relationship with SF through Bron's despair, which, after some vague circumlocutions, allows him to come to the metalogical conclusion that Delany is going to start writing what the reviewer wants to see: the a-

fore mentioned concept of entertainment.

'The reviewer tells us not to bother reading Triton's two appendices because they are crap (cheap), will give you the feeling of being talked down to (easy), and seem to have nothing to do with what went on before (lazy). The first point does not deserve comment. As to the other two: the erudite language is an integral part of the form appropriate in a critical fiction and in a discussion of the text and textus of science fiction; the appendices do have something to do with what has gone before.

'In the first appendix, Delany's statement in the discussion of text and textus that "Various bits of technological discourse...are used to redeem various other sentences from the merely metaphorical, or even the meaningless, for denotative description/presentation of incident." Example: the discourse, implicit and explicit, on physical alterations makes Philip's habitual gesture of covering a breast with a hand, rather than a muzzily sexual allusion, a comment on attitudes and practices related to the nursing of children. Another example: consider the epigraph on p. 345: "Heterotopias...destroy...that less apparent syntax which causes words and things...to hold together...they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences." When Delany writes (p. 104), "One of the junior programmers, wearing a blue body-stocking with large, silver diamond shapes," we read something very different from what, unredeemed, would have been a flacid, contentless description. The contentlessness, itself, has been transformed into an insight into the experience of existence in an heterotopic society. If Delany had told us the programmer had a mustache, it still would have said nothing (not even the sex) of the programmer other than the mustache. It is interesting to note that the first chapter is subtitled "Der Satz" or "The Sentence."

'In Appendix B, the discussion of modular and nonmodular descriptions adds another dimension to the main text. On p. 228, in the Spike's letter to Bron: "You do...adhere to some kind of code of good manners, proper behavior, or the right thing to do, and yet you are so emotionally lazy that you are incapable of implementing the only valid reason that any such code ever came about: to put people at ease, to make them feel better, to promote social communion...The only way you seem to be able to criticize your own conduct.. [is] that your version of the code was ten years out of date." Thus the myths, roles, codes of proper behavior are nonmodular descriptions because included in the descriptions are no reference routes back to the purpose of the codes. Did the reviewer think that the subtitling of the text and Appendix B as "Some Informal Remarks Toward the Modular Calculus" was gratuitous?

'The reviewer describes five characters from the book: Bron, the protagonist, as stupid and pathetic, his lover (disparagingly) as an artistic figure, and three others in terms of their sexuality. Cheap and lazy. Bron's relationships are much more complex than Mr. Vicha would have us believe. I can't help but think, for instance, that he has let most of the significance of the restaurant scene slip by in his bedazzlement with Delany's description of the food. Soap opera--or rather, the romantic myth--is one of the elements of Triton, and the parodic dialogue in this scene is one access point into the entire web of myths, roles and codes which Bron uses (metalogically, emotionally lazily) instead of logic. On p. 378, in the dream sequence: "A terrible script! Devoid of whatever meaning--or was it meaninglessness?--it might have for an audience! But I did give a brilliant performance. I must have gotten carried away with the part.") I would suggest the reviewer reread the epigraph from Mary Douglas' Natural Symbols.

'Delany has given us a character, schizophrenic by Laing's definition, molded in one speculative culture and social body (Mars), transplanted to another (Triton) even more speculative, then proceeds to detail Bron's mythical/logical confrontations with a number of elements of that social body, and maps out how he manages to inflict a good deal of the hurt on himself. And it is done in a way that with a little dilligence is clear, concise, dramatic.

'Reading Triton, we sit behind the protagonist on a well structured roller-coaster ride. We go past dozens of fresh ideas and intelligent, innovative details of speculation. We are carried inexorably to Bron's astonishing decision to change his sex and sexual preference and past it. We are carried to the point where she pauses to question not just her life but her method of coping with it ("The death at the center of such discourse is extraordinary and begins to let us see our own condition."--p. 25) and abandons possible insights with a deft application of metalogic; on to the point where, finally, she is left with only the conclusion ("Sure with a surity which, if it were this subjectively complete, must be objectivity ...") that the dawn will never come. A conclusion, for the fulfillment of which, if it is to become objectively true for her subjective self, she can only commit suicide.

'I, for one, hope Delany continues to explore our attempts (with perception filtered by the sensory shield of subjectivity as our only tool) to cope with that amazing and all but incomprehensible matrix of phenomena and relationships which is the universe.

'Reading the reviewer's speculations on Delany's intentions, I could not help but wonder what Mr. Vicha's intentions were in writing the review. Considering the three most prevalent aspects, his intention must have been to entertain.'

****

LET'S HEAR IT FOR OVERKILL

FOR TEXAS AND ZED
By Zach Hughes
Popular Library 445-00370. $1.25

Reviewed by REG

I still squirm in my chair as I think about this good bad book. I enjoyed it when it involved danger and conflict--usually the massive (virtually unthinkable--one million spaceships!) interstellar battles--and skimmed a lot through the usually short romance scenes and necessary transition scenes between battles.

Texas is an edge-of-the-galaxy freedom-loving human colonized planet, just trying to get along with the incredibly massive Earth Empire (which is interminably, stalematedly) at war with the almost equally massive Cassiopeian empire. Texas is a bit superior technologically and its people are bred for size and quality.

This the life history of Lexington Burns, an 18 year old who kidnaps

a High Lady of the Empire, is forced toserve in the Empire space navy, who engineers a mutiny (sort of) and who is the key man and leader of the Texas space navy during the climactic war that results in the *gasp* United Texican Galactic Protectorate.

Now, I ask you...FOR TEXAS AND ZED is another of the endless string of Vast Perspective and Vast Conquest sf novels...with half-vast (in this case 1/4-vast characterizations. Indeed, caricature characterizations.

Oh, well....as I said, I enjoyed it *cringe*.

****

LETTER FROM DAN MILLER

September 6. 1967

'This is a warning. There's a movie making the rounds on late-night television posturing as the great science fiction silent classic, "Metropolis. It was shown here in Chicago recently, and though one has to admire the skill with which the imitation was made--it really looks like it was filmed in Germany in 1926--it is obvious this is not the film so frequently rhapsodized as a cinematic and sf masterpiece.

'I've never seen the real "Metropolis," the one directed by Fritz Lang, but I've read all about it, so I was not suckered in by this fraud. The phony film follows the same story line as the original: The revolt of workers who toil before machines in subterranean caverns, preserving the decadent life styles of those above ground in a futuristic metropolis.

'It is said the sets of the genuine "Metropolis" are astounding, especially the mighty city itself. The ersatz "Metropolis" is none of this. Its sets were concocted by a mental defective gone berserk with a Leggo set. The buildings are painfully obvious miniatures preposterously out of scale to autos, bridges and other paraphernalia. Real buildings of that size and shape couldn't possibly be erected; their cantilevered stories would tumble, as would the insubstantial bridges that span miles of air without support while bearing the weight of autos and pedestrians. In the subterranean catacombs, where the workers waste away, I saw crumbling brick and mortar but no dust or dirt; although miles underground, sunlight illuminates the workers' city; indeed there is no illumination other than this omnipresent glow from an unseen source.

'The only conclusion is that illumination must come from the machines. The machines fester with enough light bulbs and glowing dials to illuminate Vincennes, Indiana. The lights blink and beam and short out, and the machines have more gears and cogs than Jimmy Carter has teeth, and they have steam pouring out of them and meters to read and dials to turn and levers to pump, and boy, is it ever HARD on those poor workers to keep track of all that stuff. Little wonder they revolt.

'But that just shows the intellectual paucity of the mind that conceived these machines, a mind that obviously has no idea how machinery works and would be intimidated by machinery any more complicated than a wheelbarrow. If this movie were the real "Metropolis"--the standard that most subsequent sf films have been measured against--we'd probably be getting sf movies today filmed inside a shopping center in Texas. But the phony "Metropolis" ultimately fails on the acting of its characters. What we are asked to believe is acting in the German expressionist tradition is nothing more than a bunch of simpering (and until you've seen simpering in a silent movie, you don't know the meaning of the word), whining morons made up like drag queens on their way to a gay-pride parade. The actors' idea of acting is flail their arms about and twist their hands into claws, with an occasional licking of the lips, flairing of the nostrils and widening of the eyes. This not the acting that I know the immortal Fritz Lang coaxed from the original cast of "Metropolis."

'No, indeed, this abomination is not the immortal "Metropolist." This is immortal junk, garbage, probably written and directed by the immortal Cordwainer Bird and bankrolled by the people who brought us "Space: 1999."

'I pity the gullible sf fan who might view this fraud and think he was seeing the original immortal masterpiece. The sap might question his own taste because he can't see the art that is so obvious to those who have raised "Metropolis" to its lofty position in science fiction filmdom today. For myself, I'll wait patiently until the real "Metropolis" shows up. Meanwhile, beware the suburban version.'

****

'The United States now puts 45% of its total energy into the production, care and use of vehicles. The typical American, in the course of a year, devotes 1600 hours to his car--working to pay for gas and insurance, driving, etc.---and he travels 7500 miles. So he travels about five miles per hour invested.'

--Ivan Illich, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY
May, 1976

****

LETTER FROM BARRY MALZBERG

14 August, 1976

'Thanks for the new SFR, a joy as always. My article,((in #18)) I have decided, suffers from a sudden onset of climax but this is the kind of thing which can happen to one in the late thirties. I am bemused and fascinated by Terrence Green's article and dare mention ... one comment: Those three novels plus GATHER IN THE HALL OF THE PLANETS and DWELLERS OF THE DEEP which might be seen critically as falling under one conceptual tent comprise, at the most, 8% of my output and less than a fifth of it in science fiction. I wish critics, even friendly ones like this man would stop trying to pigeonhole me...I have, whatever my flaws, more range than given credit for. His argument, for instance, would collapse if he had read UNDERLAY, THE MEN INSIDE, or GUERNICA NIGHT.

'I applaud your high-spirited defense of your own position in your column. I certainly have no complaints against the regarding of sf as primarily a means of entertainment ...most of it isn't, that's all.

'Will you indulge me as you did with Peter Mandler a couple of issues back and allow me once again to review a review? Here is Buzz Dixon reviewing Sutherland's STORMTRACK on page 25. He tells us at the outset, "According to Theodore Sturgeon, 95% of sf is crap. This book is of the remaining 10%". I assume that Dixon feels that sf is a literature plus 5% accordingly. We must have 100% of mysteries, commercial novels or gothics; only sf will give us 105%. (Well, I love it too, folks.)'

((It was a typo, one I committed and failed to spot. I'm astonished at the number of readers who mentioned this particular goof.))

'Dixon goes on to tell us the following, "STORMTRACK isn't great", Sutherland "needs practice," there are "lapses in logic, sketchy writing and scenes that don't work...in the hands of a lesser writer the surprise ending would be deus ex machina". He also points out that Sutherland "drops clues masterfully throughout...subtly weaving in clues as off-handed remarks." "One of the better writers of the late 70's".

'I think there are either two STORMTRACKS or two Buzz Dixons or perhaps two of each. Maybe when he resolves the arguments amongst all of them Dixon might be able to do some reviews for you.

'I enjoyed George Warren's letter a lot. As he appears to be learning in his early forties or whatever he is (actually he sounds fourteen) nastiness and scurrility go both ways and how do you like that, George?'

****

MOTORCYCLE HIT BY TRUCK
MAY DIE
(Oregon Journal headline)

CELEBRATING THE WILD BLACK YONDER

AN ARTICLE
BY
WAYNE N. KEYSER

Washington DC in the Bicentennial Summer has been a monumental circus. Colorful tourists speaking strange tongues ("Ah din't brang y'all four humnert mahls jist t'stuff yerseffs with hot dawgs, demmit!") have jammed the streets, every organization in town has put on its own fair, festival, exhibition or party, and we've seen the biggest-ever fireworks for the 4th (ever see a million-and-a-half people stand up and cheer? Gad!).

The Smithsonian Institution, the nation's own museum, chose this opportunity to dust off its older goodies and bring out some new ones. Its twelve-week Festival of American Folklife is like a three-month celebration of the American people and I pity the person who has missed it altogether. As a permanent addition, the Smithsonian has closed the pitiful quonset hut formerly devoted to Man's aerial efforts and opened the immense new Air and Space Museum.

The borderline between Science Fiction and Reality has always been hard to pin down, and often shifts with time. Here in DC it's especially hard to identify the line where illusion and reality meet, since the city itself is steeped in high-pressure illusion, both national and international. What better place could there be for a multi-million dollar monument to the speculative spirit of mankind? And that's what our air and space efforts have been from the beginning---every major development in the technology involved those big, basic questions "What will I find when I get up there?" and "Will I get down in one piece?".

The building itself is impressive ---four gigantic marble blocks connected by three only-slightly-smaller glass bays. Inside each of the bays hang aircraft as if in flight; the X-15 beside the Spirit of St. Louis and the Wright Brothers' unmanned craft; the Apollo-Soyuz vehicles sit on the floor just below the backup Skylab, which is rigged to allow the tourist to walk through the living area.

What was "silly Buck Rogers stuff" less than thirty years ago now looks pitifully old-hat beside the latest developments. John Glenn's original capsule, a major attraction when it first arrived shortly after Glenn's flight, now provokes claustrophobic

reactions when compared to the downright spacious lunar lander.

In the center of the main lobby is a triangular slice of moon rock mounted in plastic so that the visitor can actually touch a piece of the moon. Of course, for all I know it could have been a chunk of paving tile from a gutter somewhere, but I still got quite a thrill touching it.

The Albert Einstein "Spacearium" in the building features more pictures than stars in a 42-minute show describing the history of aerial and space exploration. Though it features some workmanlike Jeff Jones portraits of astronomers, the show seems uninspired and is not nearly or as flashy as it tries to be. I wish they'd stop the cheap tricks, make Burgess Meredith shut up and leave us alone with the stars and the music.

Far better is the Museum's film theatre, showing a special film called "To Fly"---worth seeing twice. "To Fly" interprets the flight experience in the rare Imax format---conventional theatrical film uses 35mm film running at 90 feet per minute vertically, but Imax uses about nine times the frame area on 70mm film running horizontally at 336 FPM. The five-story-high screen fills the entire field of vision, and the seats are raked so sharply that nobody's head blocks your view as the needle-sharp image and six-channel stereo present giddy, dizzying views of a helium balloon soaring over West Virginia forests, the Navy's Blue Angels over Grand Canyon and (Omigod!) a champion hang-glider flying at sunset over the green cliffs and canyons of Hawaii. A recent issue of AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER Magazine made much of the use of laser images in the final space sequence, but I didn't see anything unusual.

Separate galleries cover various sup-topics of flight, from early balloon experiments to speculation on the nature of extraterrestrial life. It is in these galleries that the connection between one day's Science Fiction and the next day's reality is made most evident.

In a cavern-like gallery dealing with the larger picture of the universe, theories on the formation of stars, planets, galaxies, and the universe itself are illustrated with slides, film and computer simulations. Around a corner, Julia Child demonstrates, on videotape, how the French Chef would prepare "Primordial soup" ---the theoretical aquatic mix which existed before life began and which, in a similar environment to the early Earth, generates the basic chemical building blocks of life. The original 5-foot model of the Enterprise, courtesy of Paramount Pictures, hangs above a copy of the plaque carried to possible alien observers aboard the Mariner space probe. Below that stands a model of a theoretical ET message to Earth, along similar lines: a plastic geometrical shape contains a scale model of the sender holding the shape, cell samples, coded information on its home star system, even computer discs with decoding information. The gallery also contains a fascinating slide-display which allows the viewer to select environmental parameters ("hot planet, heavy gravity, sea creature"), then displays a possible being fitting such an environment.

Down the hall a little way you can walk through a reconstructed WW I airfield in France or the hangar and flight decks of an aircraft carrier at sea---through the windows you can see (films of) carrier takeoff and landing techniques. Upstairs you can stand in a mockup of the lunar lander cockpit and watch the moon landing as the pilots saw it through their windows, or stand just a few inches from the five exhaust tubes of the standard Jupiter rocket and imagine the incredible force the develop.

If you're not careful you'll come down with a bad case of sensory overload and have to quit for the day (as I did). But I live here and can walk over to the Museum for lunch any day. If you're coming from a distance, try for a long, liesurely stay in town.

It's nice to have a museum that does complete justice to American pioneering of the aerospace field; our efforts are something we can be rightly proud of, and we have owed ourselves this national pat-on-the-back for a long time. Let's enjoy it before some investigative committee proves that the moon landings were all faked on a sound stage at CIA headquarters in nearby McLean, Virginia.

****

THE VIVISECTOR

A Column by Darrell Schweitzer

THE CRAFT OF SCIENCE FICTION
Edited By Reginald Brentor
Harper & Row, 1976
321 pp. $9.95

At first glance this symposium seems to be a concerted effort to put Sprague and Catherine de Camp out of business by producing a definitive text on the writing of science fiction guaranteed to supplant their recent SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK, Revised. (See review, SFR 16) But no, the two volumes go very well together, like interlocking pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

The deCamp's deal mostly with the more elementary aspects of fiction, basic plotting, story structure, consistency, character tags, etc. while THE CRAFT OF SCIENCE FICTION is more advanced. But the HANDBOOK has an excellent chapter on the business side of things, which the Brentor volume does not.

I think prospective buyers of CRAFT will find the book either interesting, if they are just readers, or useful if they are writers or would-be writers, in this case depending on where they are right now in development. I'm at the story-sale-once-in-a-while stage at the moment, and for me some of the articles like Brentor's own "SF: The Challenge to the Writer", about the nature of the field and the reasons for writing it, goes over old ground, while Fred Pohl's "The Science Fiction Professional" tells me some things I already know, like why the new writer cannot get does not need an agent, then goes on to cover how to get TV spots and speaking engagements, which are beyond my immediate concerns at the moment. But I will come back to this later, when I'm ready.

A few of the entries between these two extremes really stand out. Norman Spinrad is very good on "Rubber Sciences", the art of making a pseudo-science sound right. He uses Dianetics as a prime example, and suggests that if Hubbard hadn't had SF training he might not have pulled his scheme off as well as he did. Hal Clement also has much to say about real science in fiction in his "Hard Sciences and Tough Technologies." Harlan Ellison tells you just about everything you could possibly want to know about screenwriting (including where to go for more information), from technical terms to structure to manuscript format, to how to break in. He also tells why he has stuck it out in Hollywood, fighting to get intelligent material on the air, even when the experience is frequently like "reading Voltaire to a cage of baboons." Very simple: he doesn't want to abandon the biggest medium there is to the non-talents and lackwits without a fight. This is a brave and admirable thing, even for a person with all the required characteristics of a successful screenwriter, "great skill, a fertile imagination and the stamina of an Outback Abo".

Larry Niven is helpful with his piece on the made-up words in science fiction (which work differently than the made-up words in fantasy, by the way), showing the method behind the writer's madness. Probably the best two on actual technique are John Brunner on the novel (contrasting various narrative modes) and Jack Williamson on shorter lengths. Williamson carefully explains one way to write fiction -- the careful planning and outline approach. Katherine MacLean's "Alien Minds and Non-Human Intelligences" also has much to recommend it, even though she makes bibliographic errors like attributing a Zelazny novella to Silverberg. (which the index at the back also does.)

What articles didn't I care for? For one there's James Gunn's "Heroes, Heroines. and Villains: The Characters in Science Fiction" which says little of any importance about the same. It ends up being a shallow history of the field which frequently tries to excuse deficient characterization on a basis that I just can not accept -- allegedly some stories don't need good characters. They would only get in the way. GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is the cited example. I'll admit I've seen works which succeed and even achieve greatness without any real characterization (CHILDHOOD'S END, for example) but it seems to me this is despite this lack, not because of it. Also such an idea is a terrible thing to bring up in front of new writers (who will be reading this book in droves) because it'll make them tend to rationalize their own one-dimensional stick figures that way.

Ted Sturgeon's "Future Writers in a Future World" also contains much which could be dangerously misconstrued, because he seems overly convinced that SF can actually change the world and avert undesirable futures. This could too easily lead to propaganda, which is the death of art. H.G. Wells proved in the latter half of his career that this can ruin even the most experienced author.

Frank Herbert, allegedly writing about "Men On Other Planets" seldom sticks to his subject, and spends most of his time telling us how to avoid cliches. A noble aim, of course, and worth an article all by itself, but not adequately treated in this one which reads like a mumblesheet for two separate essays run together.

Still, the virtues of this book well outweigh its faults. I can envision quite a few different reader groups, for whom it is strongly recommended: the serious reader who wants to see what kind of thinking goes into SF; the academic class in search of a thorough textbook of theory in the field; the would-be writer making his first attempts, who has already been through the de Camp's HANDBOOK; and all but the most advanced selling writer. I doubt it'll do Asimov or Clarke much good, but for the rest of us it's a handy volume indeed. It also might be good as required reading at serious writing workshops, like Clarion, during those weeks in the middle when the initial steam has run out and nobody is producing much.

***

UNIVERSE 6
Edited by Terry Carr
Doubleday, 1976, 184 pp., $5.95

I wouldn't want people to think I'm some sort of snarling fiend who gets his jollies writing scathing reviews of other people's books, or somebody so rotten he just can't write a nice review, even if some of the things I've had in SFR these past few issues give that impression. No, I'd rather write favourable reviews, because that means I had a good time reading the books, and I'd like to let you in on this pleasure. A bad review means my time was wasted and I'm giving you a warning. Which is what book reviewing, and this column, are all about. Recommendations and warnings.

So, when I came to this sixth volume of UNIVERSE I had the highest hopes of a collection of first-rate masterpieces which would elicit a glowing notice. Alas, 'twas not so. UNIVERSE 6 wasn't a total washout, like some books I've been reviewing lately, but it wasn't very good, either.

To get the worst out of the way first, I was unable to finish either Gordon Eklund and Greg Benford's "What Did You Do Last Year?" or Charlie

Haas' "Shifting Parameters in Disappearance and Memory." I know a lot of people think it's unfair to pass judgement on something without reading all of it, but I don't. When you enter a swamp and see there's quicksand all around, you go back and warn fellow travellers. You don't have to trudge all the way to the other side. After giving a story a fair chance, if I find I'm being bored to lower states of awareness and cannot proceed without effort in the absence of enjoyment, I will stop. Chances are if your tastes are at all like mine you'll have the same reaction, so in book reviewing, as opposed to criticism (let Lester deI Rey explain the difference to you last issue) it is okay just to retreat and tell what happened.

Here's what happened: the Benford/Eklund story is a common but very difficult type, the tale of drab people getting bored silly in a not very interesting setting. The point of this particular effort is that a surfeit of technological wonders is fully as dull as no wonders at all, and we are left convinced of this, but the story takes after its subject matter and becomes a dreary, yawn-provoking affair further dragged down by some of the most insipid dialogue and characterization since Margaret St. Clair's awful Jick and Oona sitcoms in the '40's. I'm really surprised how bad this is, considering that both the perpetrators have shown themselves to be first-rate craftsmen, in the past.

Charlie Haas is a new writer whose work is otherwise unknown to me, and all I can conclude from "Shifting Parameters..." is that he either Hasn't Got It or he Hasn't Git It Yet. I didn't last long enough to be sure what this story was really about; a dozen pages of seemingly irrevelant detail, dull conversations, and a protagonist whose only identifiable trait is a craving for candy bars, and I felt I'd had enough. It's entirely possible that I never got to the story, that like many beginniner efforts this one didn't really start till page fifteen, but before I got that far I'd dozed off and woke up a few hours later lying on top of the book. That, dear reader, is Schweitzer's Infallible Sign that something is not worth finishing, especially when it happens in a short story.

Now on to the good stuff, or at least the moderately acceptable stuff. Brian Aldi-s' "Journey Into the Heartland" is a fairly interesting exploration of "inner space" in the strictest sense of the term. The prose is rather unpolished, lacking in organization and grace, but it does carry us into the life of Andrew Angsteed, a researcher who seems to have discovered a new area in the unconscious. Eventually he withdraws into it and becomes catatonic. Did he really find something new, or is he merely coming unglued? Aldiss can't make up his mind, so he interviews himself about possible endings to the story:

> Interviewer: Dothings work out better in the alternate ending?
>
> Author: Oh, much better. The first story, you see, is just a little downbeat study of character. Whereas the science fiction, the story with the happy ending, is an upbeat story of ideas. Whereas Angsteed's theories prove, in the first story, to be just a paranoid fixation, in the SF story they are proved to be true.
>
> (p. 31)

Aldiss is touching here on a classic ambiguity, more commonly found in horror fiction. If the fantastic element is "real" then the character is sane, the symptoms are misleading, and the story is a fantasy, not a valid psychological study. If the fantastic elements are delusions, then you have a mainstream story where the psychology is good but the potentially interesting fantasy aspects are dumped. How do you have both? Henty James, as I interpret him, did this brilliantly in "The Turn of the Screw" by leaving his stor- de-iberately unclear. The governess was going bananas and there really were ghosts. I'm not sure Aldiss has done the same. You may pass the self-interview off as an "experimen-al" technique, but I think it's more the sign of an incomplete work. We have here a fragment and notes for finishing it, more a critical exercise than fiction.

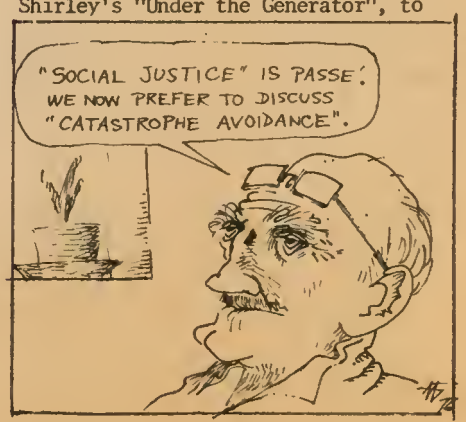
Harlan Ellison's "The Wine Has Been Left Open Too Long and The Memory Has Gone Flat" would have been just right for a book Harrison failed to complete a few years ago called THE YEAR TWO MILLION. Most SF writers today prefer to stick to the near future, where things are very much like they are today. Very few make the attempt to create a world wholly changed, with no discernable connection to current scientific knowledge. This sort of writing, if it is to succeed, has to hav- the quality of a vision, like something revealed to an Old Testament prophet, and the problem is that most current writers are extrapolators, not visionaries, which was why Harry couldn't get enough stories for his anthology.

"The Wine Has Been Left Open..." is Harlan Ellison's attempt to be visionary. His invention is commendable, but his story organizing is something else again. A vestigial plot concerns a convention of immortals from all over the galaxy held on the planet with the best acoustics. The plan to enliven the otherwise tedious existence with rare and exquisite sounds, and of course since this is a story for the printed page, Harlan cannot reproduce those sounds, but only hint at them. Most of his story consists of descriptions of the sounds and how they are produced, and very little attention is paid to character. There is a viewpoint person just visible enough to mske the difference between a necklace and a mess of loose beads, and there is even enough of a character change to make this a story and not an anecdote by classical rules, but the result is hardly moving. The piece is decidedly second-rate Ellison, however---the usual cliche that follows at this point is the statement that second-rate whoever-you're-talking-about-at-the-moment is still better than nine-tenths of everybody else's best. Not so with Ellison. He's always impressed me as a vastly uneven writer, whose last collection, DEATHBIRD STORIES, includes both the best ("The Whimper of Whipped Dogs") and the worst ("Bleeding Stones") writing being done in the field today. Middle-range Ellison is just that---middle range---and if it were written by someone else it would probably attract little notice.

The greatest oddity in this volume, or maybe even in the entire UNIVERSE series, is Steven Utley and Howard Waldrop's "Custer's Last Jump." Carr calls it a novelet, but it's not a story at all; it's an essay of the sort that GALAXY used to run as "nonfact articles" and it's a splendid one, outlining the history of an alternate world in which the airplane was invented about fifty years earlier than it was in ours. As a result the Civil War was fought with World War I technology, which was picked up by some of the indians who worked for the Confederates in the west. So the indian wars of the 1870's involved biplanes, blimps, and paratroopers and Custer was defeated by the Sioux air force. It's a fascijating idea, and the authors have done it in enormous detail, complete with a bibliography of ingenious titles like THE SEVENTH CAVALRY: A HISTORY by E. R. Burroughs, FRANKLIN'S ENGINE: MOVER OF THE WORLD by de Camp and Pratt, and MR. LINCOLN'S AIRMEN by Carl Sandburg, and dozens of subsidiary gags like a reference to an Errol Flynn movie called THEY DIED WITH THEIR CHUTES ON. Probably the best is what purports to be an excerpt from Mark Twain's journals, and ably mimmicks the style and mannerisms of that writer.

In short, I was entertained greatly by this, but was left with the feeling that a lot of potential hasn't been used. This would make a great background for a story, perhaps even a novel, in which case "Custer's Last Jump" might serve as an appendix. All it needs are plot and characters.

The best fiction this time is John Shirley's "Under the Generator", to



which I have only one objection: the year it's set in. I don't believe that a machine drawing entropic energy from dying people will be developed, and widely in use, by 1986, a mere ten years hence. Three hundred years, maybe. Most likely never, but we can accept it for purposes of the story. (But then don't listen to claims like that. SF people are notoriously conservative when it comes to prediction. Maybe Shirley is trying to teach us a lesson.) Otherwise it's a fine bit of work. Not only do we have the new machine, but society's reaction to it, a protest movement, and the emergence of a special class of operators at least as distant from everyone else as policemen are today. People regard the process as necessary but still loathsome. We also have a plausibly motivated protagonist who maintains the illusion of life for the length of the story, and a plot intrinsic to character and premise. What more can anyone ask? Of course it could have been more intense, more brilliantly written, and unquestionably an all-time classic. But it wasn't, and still it shows that Shirley has what it takes to be a front rank SF writer eventually. He is definitely a man to watch.

I'll also be watching Glen Chang, but only out of the corner of one eye. His "Stars and Darkness" begins well but denies its own premise, or, to be more precise, chucks out the old one and brings in a new one at the end. Star travellers on a long voyage are playing unauthorized psychological games while sharing dreams, via machine. Yang, the sadist, enjoys overpowering and tormenting his fellows, while the others keep coming back on the hope that sometime they'll get the goods on him. Somehow the illusionary maimings become real; corpses start to pile up; and Yang is fingered & chased through the ship by the rest of the crew, who must kill him before the cyborg brains in charge of everything discover they've all been breaking the rules. Up to this point there is real emotion and suspense, but then presto! Yang discovers that he's a phantom (strangely visible and tangible to all), a figment of the imagination of a defective cyborg brain. Somehow he hasn't known this all along, even though the story is told in the first person from his viewpoint. Stranger still, the rest of the brains doom him to eternal torment. "They have learned well," we are told. Who has? From whom? Are we to believe the entire crew are figments of the imagination? In which case, who the hell would send out an expedition like this?

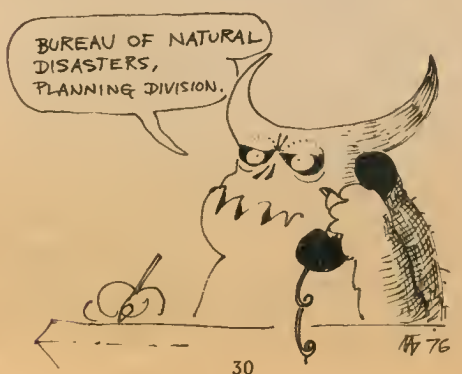
UNIVERSE 6 isn't bad by the standardsof recent original anthologies, with five of the seven stories readable, and four of them worth reading (Shirley, Waldrop/Utley, Chang, Ellison), so it might be worth picking up as a paperback, although I really cannot recommend that you spend the full six bucks on the hardcover. In any case the 27th annish of F&SF is probably a better buy.

***

THE FUTUROLOGICAL CONGRESS
By Stanislaw Lem
Avon, 1976, 142 pp., $1.25
(Originally published in Polish, 1971. Translated by Michael Kandel.)

It' time to take another look at the position of Stanislaw Lem in the SF world I think, now that the NEW YORK TIMES Book Review has run a front page feature extolling him as the greatest thing in the known universe, and many American readers have actually heard of him. Since the piece appeared there has been an upsurge of sales of Lem's books, although whether or not this will continue remains to be seen. Before, a bookseller told me that Lem just didn't move at all. He'd sold a grand total of one copy of the 25 copies of THE CYBERNIAD he'd ordered. The book was a total turkey. Yet in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe, Lem sells millions of copies.

Why is this? I have a theory, and my theory is that Stanislaw Lem hasn't got much competition in Eastern Europe. Ever since various Eastern European countries, including his native Poland, were reduced to colonial status by the U.S.S.R. things haven't been that good for the arts. Censorship has been a serious problem. Lem admits this himself in THE ALIEN CRITIC #10 when he refers to a first novel which could not be published in the early 1950's "for political reasons." This, you will recall, was the same period that Alexander Solhenitsyn was languishing in Siberia for having made an indiscreet remark about the "man with the moustache" in a personal letter. By all indications no writing could be published during this period in the U.S.S.R. which did not openly serve the State. In other words, propaganda only; no art, and a cultural wasteland the result. Certainly to a large extent this was also true in the colonies, at least until the aforementioned gentleman with the moustache relieved mankind of his existence in 1953. Which explains why Russian SF is so embarrassingly knock-kneed and primitive by American standards. It only began to evolve in the 1950's, and did so in an environment in which non-conformist thinking and personal independence, two traits which frequently go to make a good writer, were severe liabilities. So the evolution of SF in that part of the world has been late and slow, and the results usually read to the American reader like they were written in



1928, or earlier. But this sort of stuff is what the Eastern European reader is used to. What happens when a reasonably sophisticated writer comes along? He takes them by storm, becomes a sensation, and sells millions of copies. That's Stanislaw Lem, certainly the most sophisticated and advanced writer, conceptually and technically, in the Soviet Union or its satellites. He's certainly the best SF writer in Poland. (But then, is there another SF writer in Poland?) In America it's a different picture altogether. Lem is the Eastern European H.G. Wells, the starter of a tradition rather than a follower in it. But in the United States the tradition has been moving in a linear development since the 1920's and in bits and snatches since the middle of the 19th Century at least. Here Stanislaw Lem cannot expect to stand alone. He is one writer among many. Imagine, if you will, what enormous significance Robert Silverberg or Ursula LeGuin would seem to have if either of them were the only major SF writer in the United States, Canada, Great Britain or Australia. But they're not. There are many others, and all of them seem to fuse together in the public eye, to form a field of science fiction.

Now then, how well does Lem hold up against the field of science fiction, especially in the English-speaking countries? The answer is---much better than any other Eastern writer. He is equal to most of the better writers in the U.S. in some ways, but not significantly greater. In other ways he is still far behind and has a lot to learn.

His major failing is in technique, and this new book shows it to an extent hardly hinted at in his first English-language novel, SOLARIS. (Which was conceptually brilliant, but clumsily put together. Still, I would recommend it to anybody who can find it. It's now out of print.)

THE FUTUROLOGICAL CONGRESS shows once and for all that Lem doesn't know how to handle exposition. This is a basic skill in modern science fiction, and it has been ever since Robert Heinlein developed ways of integrating background into the story without stopping to lecture. He did this in the early 1940's, before which characters in science fiction tended to ask each other dumb questions, and after which everybody copied Heinlein. So the whole field is in debt to Heinlein, but Mr. Lem isn't, and it shows.

To be specific. The first half of this novel is superb. It takes place at a futurological convention in Costa Rica, during which there are political upheavals and a general saturation bombing of everyone and everything with psychedelic drugs by the police in an attempt to restore order. There are fine moments of satire, and some dizzying twistings of reality/unreality reminiscent of the best of Philip K. Dick. Our hero, Ijon Tichy, gets so freaked out that even after the drugs have worn off (apparently) he doesn't trust the reality of anything. He is deemed incurable and

put into cold sleep. He then wakes up in the future, in an era of a "chemocratic" utopia, and, alas, what started out like very good Dick turns into fair to middling Hugo Gernsback. Lem does not know how to make his characters live in his imaginary future. All they can do is talk about it, ask each other unlikely questions, and jot down findings in diaries. Some of the ideas are, as we've come to expect from Lem, extremely inventive, but he totally fails to make stories out of them. This last half is quite dull reading, especially after so promising an opening, but it might be worthwhile to writers, who could mine it for undeveloped material. It's a goldmine in that respect.

The ending, by the way, is apallingly obvious. I won't say what it is, but if you think you see it coming after only a few pages into the second half, you're probably right. Conclusion: crude by American standards, but interesting. Get it while you can, if you're curious to see genuine SF from another culture, because I'm not sure Lem will last long in this country. Certainly the ludicrous claims made for him by the NY TIMES and by his agent, Franz Rottensteiner, won't improve his chances. Readers will go to Lem's books expecting something really earthshattering and they won't get it and they'll be terribly disappointed. Enjoyment of a book is frequently ruined this way. If something is heralded as an all-time classic and it isn't, we feel let down. If no such claims are made for it, we see it on its merits. It would be a shame if Lem is not appreciated on his merits, but I suspect that's going to be the case. I see some signs of it in U.S. fandom already. (Which is not a totally untypical reader sampling. We vote awards for, say, THE FOREVER WAR, and the general readership buys it like crazy.)

Sooner or later some smartass critic is going to do a full-scale The-Emperor-Is-Naked article on Lem, and he may be sneered right out of serious consideration. To prevent that from happening, I suggest you read some of his books at once. Also available in English are MEMOIRS FOUND IN A BATHTUB, THE CYBERNIAD, THE INVESTIGATION, and THE INVINCIBLE. Try them, because they are a significant part of 20th Century SF, but don't approach them expecting Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and the Prophet of God all rolled into one.

The translation of THE FUTUROLOGICAL CONGRESS, I might mention in passing, is excellent, although sometimes I suspect that the translator has turned collaborator and rewritten parts of the book. I mean, it reads like it was written in English when you come to something like this:

> The butter, melting, hissed and spat, and the thought that butter might sputter and make the flame gutter was so hilarious that I burst out laughing...
> (p.19, italics author's)

Now, I really doubt those words rhymed in the original Polish, just as I doubt that the numerous and clever puns and other verbal tricks could come through translation intact. There are portmanteau words like "intellectronics" and "wego" (the ego of a multiple personality) which seem to be native to English. I would be curious to know how this was done, but in any case I'm grateful for it, since it does liven things up considerably, even in the tedious latter half.

***

FUTURE POWER
Edited by Jack Dann & Gardner Dozois
Random House, 1976, 256 pp., $7.95

At last, at last, an anthology I can completely respect. Well...almost completely. The wonders of FUTURE POWER are manifold, and among them is a readable Felix Gotschalk story, an event so rare it must surely herald the advent of the Millenium.

The theme of this book is power, mostly in the sense of man's ability to control others. Dann and Dozois (mostly Dozois, I suspect since many of the ideas in the interview I did with him are repeated) discuss possible futures in their introduction, and admirably manage to be neither technophilic nor technophobic, and bring up Gardner's basic three science fiction futures. Leaving aside the first one in which everybody dies and story possibilities are severely limited, we have the future of arrested technological development and a new dark age, and that of unlimited technological progress. The stories at least loosely deal with the idea of power against these backgrounds.

Ursula LeGuin's "The Diary of The Rose" is a quietly terrifying story about near-future psychiatry and the destruction of personality for political reasons. A woman therapist equipped with a machine that lets one peer into the mind of the patient, with the best intentions in the world, discovers that her allegedly "disturbed" subject is really brilliant, perfectly sane, and a political deviationist, whose mind will eventually be erased by electroshock in the process of his "cure".

This may sound familiar to you, like something out of a newspaper. I'm sure the story will be banned in the Soviet Union if the censors are on their toes. Is it a contemporary story, then? No, it is real science fiction, and not just because there's a technological gadget in it. The mind-probing device is central to the story, and in a way it is the story, because only through the machine are we able to appreciate fully the impending loss of the patient's personality. One of the images appearing on the scr-en provides th- metaphor which is the mainspring of the piece: a perfectly formed rose. A rose is a beautiful flower with thorns. Good and bad together, like science, like the human mind, the individual. The therapist's name, by the way, is Rosa, and it doesn't seem heavy-handed because the story is exquisitely, flawlessly put togethe-, and it's certainly one of the best SF shorts to be published in years, and one of Le Guin's best, which is saying a lot. Keep it in mind when award time comes.

Admittedly anything is a comedown after a story of such calibre, and in this case the particular comedown is one of the two reprints in the collection, Damon Knight's "The Country of the Kind." It's also a double comedown for me because I knew that it was in some way a parallel of H.G. Wells' "The Country of the Blind," so I went and read the Wells first, then came back to the Knight, which suffered by comparison. Both are studies of relative values, but Damon's seems a lot more contrived. His premise is that a murderer in a pacifist society is prevented from doing harm to others by an alteration of a type of epilepsy he conveniently has, but otherwise is allowed to do anything he wants at the price of total ostricism. The criminal then goes on a destruction and lootin g spree and thinks he's on top of the world. But he's not and the people around him regard him as a cripple, the same way Wells' blind folk regarded the sighted man as imperfect. Knight's idea is interesting, but it's hardly believable or well developed. Dann and Dozois might have done better to reprint the original Wells.

"Smoe and the Implicit Clay" is one of those lunatic things R.A. Lafferty has been writing for years. We often say that nobody writes like so-and-so, but if Lafferty's case it's perfectly true. Seriously, who else would write a story about an attempt to find out who has been on new worlds before the explorers get there, then bring in such answers as Kilroy, invisible indians, semi-transparent cabbies, a planet full of buffalo turds (if I'm reading correctly), ands a cigar-smoking, pot-bellied, walrus-moustached computer extension, and

make it all make sense on its own level? Outwardly there doesn't seem to be much cause and effect in his stories, but I think I've figured out how Lafferty works. The causes are novel and the effects unheard of, but still there is a relationship. To borrow a few words from Harlan Ellison, who was trying to explain a similarly crazy writer we had at Clarion the year I was there, Lafferty lives in another universe, perhaps his own personal one, but difinitely not our own, and on those occasions when our universe rubs against his, a story results, told basically in the terms of the other universe.

Yes, that's it, I think, although unlike the other guy Lafferty at least writes in the language of our universe, so we are able to follow him where no earthly mind has gone before. I think. Either that or I'm being slowly sucked into Lafferty's universe, because the more I read of his work the more I come to appreciate it, and maybe even understand some of it.

What has this got to do with the stated theme of the book? A little, but not much. The editorial blurb tells us the story may be read as a demonstration of how we can prevail against technological gimmickry (the indians defeat the paleface computer), but it also might be taken to show how having an entirely new paradigm for perceiving reality may force your opponent to meet you on your own terms and confuse the hell out of him.

"She Waitd For All Man Born" is top drawer James Tiptree (which is the delight of this book---virtually all the stories are the authors' best) which I might point out for an award if LeGuin hadn't written "The Diary of The Rose." It's about the ultimate power struggle between life and death, and how the two come to terms at last. To be more specific: after several prologues which take up half the text and show the race between new means of life and new means of death (e.g. advanced medicine and nuclear weapons), Tiptree draws in a very short space an admirably detailed picture of a regressive, post-Blast society more complete than what some writers can do in a novel. Into this setting a strange child is born, extremely pale, blind, yet amazingly healthy and possessed of unnatural powers of healing---and killing, it turns out.

This child is immortal, but death-dealing, a combination of the ultimate in life and death. She destroys all life on Earth, perhaps in the universe, but cannot die herself. The story works as science fiction, as myth, and as an amazingly condensed yet living epic, all in about 3000 words.

The Gotschalk story I mentioned earlier is "The Day of The Big Test." The title tells all. A boy genius takes an intelligence/psychological adjustment test, and as a result of his passing it his family is moved to (apparently) better quarters. The editors seem to think this is some sort of daring and "wildly improbable" speculation, but unless I'm missing the point entirely (in which case I would argue that the author has failed to communicate the point, and if he really cares about such things he should not let such misinterpretations happen) it all seems rather tame to me. We have a government apparently run by psychiatrists, or in which they play an important part. We have one of those large indoor urban cultures familiar from the FOUNDATION trilogy, THE WORLD INSIDE, and many others, and that's about all. The story is a trifle, although the mere fact that it's intellig ible shows a big improvement for Gotschalk. His prose is still awkward and cluttered with unexplained jargon (including something about engrams---is he a Scientologist?), but at least it's competent English.

Next we have something by George Alec Effinger, a writer who, quite honestly, has never appealed to me. "Contentment, Satisfaction, Cheer, Well-Being, Gladness, Joy, Comfort, And Not Having To Get Up Early Anymore" is about how the six representatives who rule the world on a folksy, informal, first-name basis start to nudge one another out of power until there is only one left. It's a cotton candy coup de etat and nobody seems to be hurt or particularly upset, and finally the single survivor gives up control of the world to a giant computer, then joins his fellows in retirement. There's no conflict, and the whole thing may be summed up in one word: bland. It's the sort of story that isn't unpleasant to read, but when you get done you say "So what?", shrug, and go on to something else. It does make an interesting parallel to D.F. Jones' COLOSSUS, save that Jones approached the same situation with the shivering horrors---which I find more plausible in human terms.

Now the other reprint, by an unknown writer. A.K. Jorgensson is really Robert W.A. Roach who lives in Algeria, we are told, but the editors don't mention if this guy has ever published anything besides his single story, "Coming of Age Day," or where that story appeared (copyright 1965), but on the basis of this effort alone, I'd say that Jorgensson has the potential of becoming a major SF writer. Future variations on sex and government control thereof are a recently developed cliche in the field, but Jorgensson makes it seem fresh, perhaps because he was writing SF before most SF writers discovered such things, or because he comes from outside the regular SF community, or maybe because he's simply more imaginative than most.

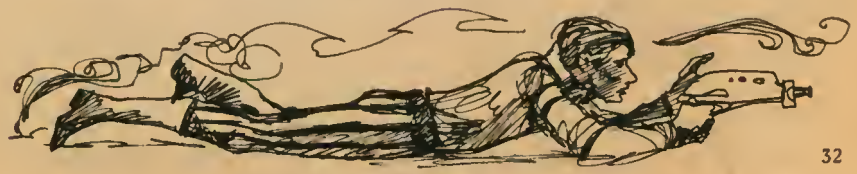
He tells of a neo-Victorian era in which sex is dirty again, and controlled by some novel bits of biological engineering. All this comes through careful selection of detail and overheard conversation as a child goes in to his sexiatrist for promotion to adult. No more will I say. Read it.

After this the anthology begins to slip a little. Vonda McIntyre's "Thanatos" is about a world in which such problems as pollution have been allowed to run unchecked beyond all hope of reversal. All animals have died, and for biological purposes, such as making serums, people are used, mostly political malcontents. There is a very real horror in this, and the tale is competently told, but it seems to me that virtually all the Vonda McIntyre stories I've read have been about lone women in hopeless and degrading situations. She may not realise she's repeating herself, but

when her short fiction is collected (as that of Nebula winners inevitably is) the result will be a very monotonous book.

Finally we have a decidedly frustrating and disappointing novella by Gene Wolf, "The Eyeflash Miracles." The story treads the fine line between intentional and artistically valid ambiguity and outright confusion, trips, and falls into the wrong area. It's about a blind boy (who sees at times, mostly unreal things) who may or may not be a mutant homo superior, or one of several gods, who wanders around the U.S., time undefined, society similar to ours, government much different (running genetic experiments on humans and fully willing to slaughter the results), without accomplishing anything in particular. Parts of it are interesting, even well done, especially some of the dream sequences, and the task of presenting all this from the viewpoint of a blind person (all feel, no images, except in special cases where he does see vividly), but the story meanders and lacks drama. At times cause and effect don't seem to apply. When the boy is threatened with death, the situation is not resolved. It merely ends. The author skips to something else. The result is like a film cut to ribbons. Most of the continuity is missing. You can watch it all the way through, but afterwards you wonder why you bothered, and you also wish the story had been complete enough to mean something. Too bad. Wolfe is capable of much better, but even so a single strikeout like this isn't bad for an anthology of such overall high quality.

***



I'd like to publicly commend Random House for publishing books, not cheaply printed conglomerations of pages loosely thrown in the general direction of a plastic back. This edition of FUTURE POWER is printed on good paper, with sewn signitures, and a genuine cloth binding. Very few publishers go through this much trouble anymore. Even Random House didn't until recently. Berkley-Putnam and Scribners are the only two other major houses I can think of right off. St. Martin's used to, but regrettably stopped. Any collector of old books can assure you that the sewn signitures are essential if a book is to last more than a few years and be significantly more durable than a paperback. Random House books won't disintegrate in five years. Librarians please note.

***

Mervyn Peake Writings & Drawings
compiled by Maeve Gilmore & Shelagh Johnson Academy/St. Martin's Press, 1974, $15.00

Mervyn Peake was one of those rare geniuses, seldom seen in fantasy or any other field, whose works will surely live as long as the language simply because they are so unique that no writer of later generations will ever duplicate them. His reputation rests mostly on the monumental GORMENGHAST trilogy, and perhaps his other novel, MR. PYE, and the novella "A Boy in Darkness" are known to more than a few. But I wonder how many readers know that Peake also drew, painted, wrote poetry, plays, short stories, etc.? He was an amazingly versatile artist, who did outstanding work in several media, even if only his novels are widely circulated.

We owe a lot to Maeve Gilmore (Peake's widow) and Shelagh Johnson, because it is only through their efforts that we are afforded a full view of the range of Peake's talents. Writings and Drawings is a large, well reproduced, deluxe book, with drawings or paintings on nearly every page, sometimes in color. From it we see much more of Peak's graphic skills than could ever be imagined from the sketches and spot illustrations that are found in most editions of the GORMENGHAST books. Before this the only completed Peake drawings I had seen were the frontispiece for TITUS ALONE, the jacket and interiors for MR. PYE, and the two-color cover on NEW WORLDS 189. Now I realize how tiny a tip of the whole iceberg these were.

Peake had at least four styles as a graphic artist. The most often seen is the sort of mild caricature found in the GORMENGHAST books, which show a character's personality at a glance. Then there is the much more bitter, wildly exaggerated type, such as the drawing used on the cover of Graham Greene's magazine SATIRE. The topic is "child Life" and the picture shows a ragged, emaciated child sitting in a pile of rubble, while two fat ladies at least 500 pounds each, look on; the caption reads: "Really, now, Mrs. Jones, I dunno what children is comin' ter these days! 'Ark at 'im now! Wants me ter tyke 'im ter 'Yde Park...an' 'im wif a pufficklly good back garden ter play in!"

On the facing page there is an ink and watercolor illustration from an unpublished beastiary of imaginary animals called THE MOCCUS BOOK, complete with nonsense jingles to explain each creature. These, if they may be compared to anything, remind me a little of Dr. Seuss. They have none of the barbed nastiness of the SATIRE cover, or the horror of the wartime series, "An Exhibition of the Artist, Adolph Hitler."

The fourth style is found in the book illustrations, from which Peake derived a good deal of his income. These are black and white, somewhere halfway between impressionalism and realism, showing scenes from TREASURE ISLAND (a great favorite of Peake's), THE RHYME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER, ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, and so on. And scattered throughout are many things which don't fit into these broad groupings, several paintings of figures which rather resemble early Picasso, one or two near abstracts, a map of three imaginary countries, rough sketches, simple line drawings, the proposed outline of a television cartoon, and much more.

The writings are equally interesting. The American reader gets what is probably his first chance to read Peake's poetry, all of it having been published previously in very scarce British editions only. Some of this is rhymed nonsense verse, and the rest free form, that sort of poetry which is distinguished from prose solely by the way it is arranged on the page. I don't think it is as effective as his best prose. Much of it does nothing for me; in some only a line or two stands out; but occasionally one works all the way through. One of the best begins like this:

> If I could see, not surfaces,
> But could express
> What lies beneath the skin
> Where the blood moves
> In fruit or head or stone,
> Then I would know the one
> Essential
> And my eyes
> When dead
> Would give the worm
> No hollow food.

There are lots of fragments and drafts, including one of a section of TITUS GROAN when it was called THE HOUSE OF DARKNESS, and another from something called MR. SLAUGHTERBOARD, which is much gloomier and more intense than the published childrens' book CAPTAIN

SLAUGHTERBOARD DROPS AN ANCHOR. Also present are several essays; the complete short book for artists, THE CRAFT OF THE LEAD PENCIL; Peake's first published work, a piece from a childrens' magazine written when he was ten and living in China, and, for the first time anywhere, one of his plays, THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER.

Peake wrote several plays, but got nowhere. One of them THE WIT TO WOO, was staged in the 1950s but failed promptly, and THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER was broadcast over BBC radio in 1956. Of course, it's hard to judge what any play must be like performed by merely reading it, especially a radio play since it has no descriptive stage directions, but I would guess that THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER was interesting without being very memorable. It's about an artist who is hired to paint a nativity mural in a church, and then shocks the congregation by showing Christ in a spaceship (shades of CHARIOTS OF THE GODS!). The churchmen don't appreciate the aesthetics of the thing, and the painter leaves town, only to return some years later to find his work accepted, respectable, and ignored by the public. This is not a very effective play. Its preachments about widespread insensitivity to art are well made, but just not very dramatic. Playwrighting was not one of the author's strengths.

I suppose the only thing wrong with this book is the fact that several pages are taken up with excerpts from the well-known and easily available works, mostly the GORMENGHAST trilogy. Of course, the compilers wanted to give a well-rounded sampling of all Peake's work, but I doubt that many readers who are unfamiliar with the major writings will be buying this book. So what we really have here is a collection of Peake marginalia, an art folio-cum-scrapbook (where else would you see drawings for the never written OPERA OF GORMENGHAST, or a rough outline for the fourth Titus book?) and the space could have been better used by printing another of the plays, or perhaps one or both of the short stories Peake had in SCIENCE FANTASY, "Danse Macabre" and "Same Time Same

Place" (issues 60 and 61, 1963), which have never appeared in a Peake collection.

The bibliography at the back of the book is not to be trusted entirely. The above mentioned short stories are not listed, and neither is the chapter from TITUS ALONE which appeared in NEW WORLDS #194. And an ambiguous entry reading, "Speculative fiction (NEW WORLDS) October 1967" turns out to be, on checking, Langdon Jones' review/essay on A REVERIE OF BONE, but you'd never know from the bibliography. (While they're listing such things, it would have only been consistent to mention Mr. Jones' other long review, or GORMENGHAST, in issue 181, April 1968.)

Still, the excellencies of this book overwhelm any shortcomings. It presents a lot of rare material, gives a good outline of Peake's career, and is a fitting tribute to one of the finest creative minds the fantasy field has ever known. Highly recommended.

****

LETTER FROM DAMON KNIGHT

August 25, 1976

'When a reviewer says a story is bad, it may be because the story is incomprehensible or badly written, or because the reviewer is uncomprehending and a bad reader. In Darrell Schweitzer's review of ORBIT 17, he often misses the point and then complains that there is none. Seth McEvoy's "Which in the Wood Decays," for instance, is a burlesque of the cliches Schweitzer complains of; his solemn criticism is almost as funny as the story itself. Schweitzer also fathers on me Jim Blish's "Call the rabbit a smeerp," and says about Kathleen Sidney's "The Anthropologist":

> I got quite a start four pages into the story discovering that somebody named Robert, who otherwise seemed a normal child, had three heads, nine legs, and three fingers on each hand/foot.

The first page of Sydney's story is only eight lines long. Halfway down the second page the attentive reader will find the following:

> But he was spared one agony: he made a poor scapegoat. They could not easily project their fears about their own human weaknesses onto a beast with three heads and nine legs.

'It seems to me that criticism like this really helps nobody---author, editor or reader.'

((I have just read "Which in the Wood Decays" and enjoyed it. It seems an amusing dead-pan mockery of a set of cliches...but...also a trivial piece. It's been done so often. Every young writer discovers cliches and sets out to demolish them. They usually outlive him.))

****

LETTER FROM HARLAN ELLISON

7 August 76

'A few brief, scattered comments on items in SFR #18.

'1. Thank you for the pleasant, passing nod of approval for my short story, "Strange Wine," in the 50th Anniversary issue of AMAZING STORIES. I'm rather fond of that little piece, and it was with mild sadness that I heard the editor, Ted White, had said it was a poor piece. Had Ted not said it from the lecture platform at some convention or other, I might not have minded so much, but he did; and (while he was well within his rights to have said it because he didn't accept it for inclusion in that issue, the publisher did) I went back and re-read it several times to see if it really was a bummer. Perhaps your linking it with Ted's own story as one of the "good things" in the issue may give Ted cause to reconsider. Perhaps not. But either way, it's always nice when an outside observer casually drops a plaudit on something over which a shadow has been cast.

'2. I think your response to Charles Platt's letter about Darrell Schweitzer's review of NEW WORLDS #6 was unfair. While it is possible Charles was a bit harsher than he needed to be, I can fully sympathize with his position. After ten years of nuddled, clearly confused reviews in fanzines, by people whose competency to review experimental fiction can easily be held up to question---and a degree in English Lit is considerably less of a valid credential than your response would lead us to believe---I can fault Charles for his vehemence a good deal less than you did. Readers of SFR know full well your general negative reactions to experimental writing, but to lump all of modern fiction outside the sf label as filled with "ambiguities and non-plots, metaphors and indirect meanings" is, I hope you'll agree upon reconsideration, more than slightly unfair.'

((No, I'll only reconsider to the point of slightly unfair.))

'3. Personal reasons of revenge (utterly despicable and without even the faintest tinge of moral justification) made me smile long and hard at Buzz Dixon's stomping of the "Richard Avery Expendables series. For those who are unaware of the true identity of 'Avery,' permit me to ventlate my vengeful instinks by noting that the lurker behind the name is none other than Englan's self-anointed adjudicator of "quality" and "trash" in science fiction, Mr. Edmund Cooper. Those whose interest in imaginative fiction roams beyond the territorial confines of the United States will find this amusing, as Mr. Cooper has long carried on a campaign in the U.K. against many American sf writers as "purveyors of adolescent twaddle." That I am one of these alleged purveyors is, of course, the reason for my ungentlemanly chuckling. Mr. Cooper, sf reviewer for one of the more prestigious English newspapers, has delivered reams of review copy---not to mention extensive interviews---in which he bemoaned our Yankee proclivity for wallowing in hack trash. Though I'm certain the word shit would never pass Mr. Cooper's lips or his typewriter, his ability to dismiss virtually an entire nation of fantasists with an awesome cavalier certainty forces me to boil down his effusions to that objective word. That he is responsible for the dreary, dreadful "Avery" books is a bit of incidental intelligence I clutch to my nasty little black soul with uncommon joy. My undying thanks to Mr. Dixon, a critic of rare perception who also, not incidentally, gave a nice, strong review to Jim Sutherland's STORMTRACK, the first of my "Discovery" titles.

'4. David Taggart's mentioning that we were both reviewed in a 1954 issue of IMAGINATION hardly makes me feel old. It gives me a feeling of permanence, continuity, oneness with the ages...as if I were a sarsen stone at Stonehenge. Come on, Dick, get with the program. We're both "elder statesmen" now. I'm 42 and loving every minute of it...looking forward to age 50...and watching with interest to discover what phrase the clichemongers will devise to subsum me when enfant terrible clearly becomes invalid. If it didn't become so ten years ago.

'5. Also delighted to discover Mr. Dixon is a fan of BBC's DR. WHO series. Both my wife, Lori, and I became rabid fans of the series during our trip to England last year, and again this past June-July. The new segments, featuring Tom Baker, are even more delightful than the ones PBS has been running here in the States with Jon Pertwee as the uniquitous Time Lord. The shows are so filled with fun and intelligence and solid adventure sf that those who revel in SPACE:1999 and STAR TREK would be blown away if they could see them. And in the U.K., the Good Doctor is a cult-generating figure as wholeheartedly worshipped as Mary Hartman is (among a certain set) here in the U.S. I only wish the Hugos extended to English presentations: I'd quickly nominate the four-part story called "Planet of Evil," which we saw in company with Mike Moorcock last year, one chapter each Saturday for a month, and which the BBC re-ran in one lovely scoop this year.

'My God, this has gone on much longer than I'd intended! All in all, a fascinating issue.'

****

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER

August 18, 1976

'Charles Platt's letter in the new SFR ((#18)) had me agreeing with him on one point. It is true that there are science fiction fans who have never read anything else, and I agree 100% that these people are unqualified to review anything but SF, the same way that a mainstream critic who has never read any SF before is unqualified to review SF. I would even go one step further and say that someone who has never read anything but SF is not qualified to review anything, because his viewpoints are too narrow and he has only had vague and indirect contact with the culture of the society around him. SF is a part of that culture, but not a large part. I'm reminded of the story about the blind man who reported that an elephant is flexible, thin, and rather like a rope, because he had touched the tail and nothing else.

'Fandom is loaded with this type of person. The most ludicrous display I can remember happened when Dave Harris was giving a talk at a Philadelphia fan meeting. He was telling how Maxwell Perkins was the John Campbell of the mainstream in the early part of this century, influencing general fiction the same way Campbell influenced SF in the 1940's, bringing major new writers to the fore and all that, when a dimwit raised his hand and said, "But what did he ever produce that can compare with Hal Clement?" Repressed giggles. Most fans aren't this far gone, you know. Harris looked rather taken aback but recovered quickly and said, "Well, THE GREAT GATSBY, the novels of Thomas Wolfe and Ernest Hemingway ..." Sigh... There really are literary bigots in this field who are fully as bad as the general critics in, say, NEWSWEAK. I know a few people who will come right out and say, "But I can't read that! It's mainstream!"

'Platt no doubt places me in that group, but he doesn't know my interests and reading habits. I do lots of reading in areas we provincially call "outside the field" (trans.: all human thought and endeavor prior to the 19th century, and a good bit of it thereafter.) The degree you mentioned my receiving is a Master's in English Lit. I didn't have to write a thesis, but the most extensive paper I wrote was on Lord Dunsany's plays (part of a book I'm doing for T-K Graphics---I never like to let writing go to waste) but besides that my heaviest concentration was in medieval and Elizabethan/Jacobean writing, although I did take most of the standard courses like Modern English Drama, and (yes, even) Modern American Fiction. (Which mostly consists of Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and otherwriters long dead, curiously enough.)

'Anyway, I am curious to know what Platt means by stories which are "humanistic rather than mechanistic." My own background is much more in the humanities than the sciences, although I do have a smattering of science since I don't think we can get an appreciable grip on realit- without it. My scientific education is that of a layman, and by my standards at least rather spotty. (Much better than that of the general public, however, if the success of SPACE:1949 is any indication.) Pardon my ignorance, but it's always seemed to me that something "humanistic" is concerned with people, their emotions, perceptions, etc. The earliest works and thinkers to which this term is usually applied are late medieval and early Renaissance types who turned away from contemplation of God and the angels and decided that man and his world were worth bothering with.

'My objection with the stories in NEW WORLDS 6 was that they had no intersection with human reality at all. I would argue that they were as coldly mechanical (i.e. both non-emotional and non-intellectual at the same time, thus having no appeal to the reader) as anything written by a member of our species can be. Platt insists this is for readers more familiar with modern literature. Well, in a way he is right, if he means it for the people who read, say, Donald Barthelme. I would level the same charges against him, if CITY LIFE is any indication. Barthelme is one of these guys fascinated by putting words in funny patterns, and with typography (like writing a "story" consisting of numbered one-sentence paragraphs.). This also has nothing to do with human experience and reads like a computer printout. Hardly what I would call humanistic or even human, but then Platt and I have different definitions, obviously. I am left with the feeling that many modern mainstream writers have passed into advanced decadence, abandoning character and theme, and concentrating on form entirely. Which suggests that science fiction has no cause for an inferiority complex. The mainstream writers have a great deal to re-learn from the likes of Silverberg and Kate Wilhelm. Or some of them do. There still is Isaac Bashevis Singer who writes characters in his stories. (And he also protest obscurity and meaninglessness in modern fiction, stating in an interview that clarity is a virtue and the public is being consistently lied to by the New York literary establishment.

'NEW WORLDS used to be, circa 1976, an excellent, very literate science fiction magazine. I wrote lots of favorable reviews of NEW WORLDS material back then, of CAMP CONCENTRATION, AN AGE, A CURE FOR CANCER, BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD, and even BU JACK BARRON. But somewhere along the line the magazine turned into a "little" literary magazine. This is a very specialized type of publication, probably not viable commercially (as witness the non-profit, University-funded nature of most others of the type) which appeals to a very limited readership. It is, I think, much more limited than most mainstream. Someone like Gore Vidal or, (to use my earlier example) Singer can reach a much wider audience because their work is about people and real situations, and it means something to someone besides the writer.

'Platt says that NEW WORLDS 6, as published by Avon, was "non-science-fiction." He means clearly that it was this sort of "literary" anthology. Why then, pray tell, was it marketed as science fiction? It was. The words "scpeculative fiction" (the actual label used) have been worn into non-meaning, but the reader still associates this with science fiction. So, too, do the distributors and retailers, because that's where the book ended up---in the science fiction section. It doesn't belong there, but it gets there, because as recently as the four issues of the quarterly published by Berkley, it was mostly science fiction. If Platt wanted to edit a different kind of magazine, why not found a new one with a different title? He has as much chance of turning a science fiction magazine into a "literary" one as he would, say, ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE. One cannot change a magazine from one type to another, retain the same title, and hope it will sell. Readers of the old type of material will be disappointed, and readers of the new will never get the word. I imagine the readers for the type of thing Platt is publishing [or was publishing---two developments have happened: 1) Hilary Bailey is now editing the series, and 2) from what Platt told me at Lunacon, the Corgi Books version will not last beyond #12] did not pick the thing up because they thought it was science fiction.

'Actually, the vast majority of the stuff I see in NEW WORLDS (which I still read, by the way, the most recent one to come my way being #9---which is much better, in all fairness) which I would consider to be fiction at all is science fiction. The series consists of SF, poetry, fragments, and non-functional word patterns. About the only decent mainstream story (i.e.

a realistic story about persons and events in the world as we know it, with no speculative elements) was Harvey Jacobs' "The Negotiators" in issue #190, but that was quite a few years ago...1969 to be precise. I think NEW WORLDS will appeal less to the reader of mainstream fiction than it will to the science fiction reader.

'As for the origin of the phrase "non-functional word pattern", I hope this term will be my lasting contribution to the vocabulary of criticism. We have needed something like that for a long time. The idea occurred to me when reading the Sayings of Chairman Pierce, who suggested (quite sensibly) that calling something iddescibable" is not only a cliche but a serious copout. It means the critic or reviewer has refused to deal with the item at hand. Nothing is indescribable. Then, I wondered, how shall we describe the standard NEW WORLDS whatsit, the non-communicative piece without any intellectual or emotional content, lacking the ideational content of an essay or the emotional/human values and experiences of a short story? (Also devoid of anything I would recognize as poetry.) To be specific & descriptive, yet general, I dubbed these things (having the Ballard "condensed novels" in mind) as "word patterns." You can't argue with that, can you? Either they are random words or they are word patterns, and I'm giving the writer the benefit of the doubt. Now, since they communicate nothing and serve no purpose, they are useless. Non-functional as in having no function or cause for existence. Hence the non-functional word pattern. It has been a fad among pretentious writers of science fiction, but one of the most positive developments in SF of late has been a wholesale return to human values on the part of the new and relatively new, post-"new wave" writers like Martin, Dozois, Reamy, Varley, Haldeman, etc. NEW WORLDS, representing the older, non-human, computerese type of writing is now old-fashioned. This is what happens to any closed-off elite. Sooner or later everybody else goes off in another direction and it becomes a backwater.

'By an astonishing coincidence I received a humble dittoes fanzine in the mail along with SFR, something called PROTEUS, and in it David Fryxell sums up my feelings about Barry Malzberg very aptly. Malzberg is apparently "still hanging around, presumably waiting for mourners." I'm amused and to some degree amazed by the way that Malzberg has managed to attract more attention to himself by leaving the field than he ever did while in it. He also seems to have been "leaving" the field for an awfully long time, perhaps with the intent of topping Harlan Ellison's epic display of "leaving fandom" which has been going on since the 1969 Worldcon. Maybe Malzberg will make "leaving SF" his new full-time career, at least for a few years... Pardon me. The man may be sincere, but I suspect cynical showmanship, an attempt to raise himself to the level of Silverberg and Ellison (since both are publicly exiting at the same time) without writing as well as either of them. I do not think Malzberg will find any "mourners". He will not be missed or remembered. The poor fellow is under the delusion that he is a major talent, and th- cruel insensitive world just doesn't recognize him, alas & boo-hoo. His hardcover books are already being remaindered in large numbers. I sometimes see three and four different titles on the same table. I don't buy them because his omnipresent short stories have taught me better. I tried to read HEROVIT'S WORLD and the joke ran thin after thirty pages. The egotistical, self-pitying whine didn't help much either. This is hardly my idea of a major work of criticism, or anything, contrary to Terrence Green. I would be more expecting one to come from John Jakes or E. C. Tubb than from Malzberg. Really, his only significant contribution to SF has been to kill the technophobic, unplotted, woe-is-me novel by running it into the ground with hordes of pallid rehashes. To me at least Malzberg's talent is a very minor one, below average but with some potential, now prostituted beyond any hope of redemption. Too bad. He was lost to the field long before now. You know, the only Malzberg story I ever read which I could remember afterwards was his first one, back in 1967. That's mediocrity for you.'

((Divining another's motives is a seductive, but dumb game. I know from experience. That "waiting for mourners" line is a cheap shot.

((I think some of Barry's short fiction will live a long time. I think he misuses his talent at novel length. Nevertheless, I enjoyed HEROVIT'S WORLD and OVERLAY, and will remember them.

((In writing, even an exit takes a long time, because of long publishing schedules and heavy inventories.))

'Barry's essay this issue (the intro to his book) is of course thrown way off by his assumption that all writers are like himself. They aren't. It isn't always the same old story. There are dozens of older writers in our field, people who have been writing constantly for over thirty years, who are not miserable and burned out, and who will probably continue to write happily until they drop. I'm thinking of people like Asimov, Clarke, de Camp. I doubt their experiences have been similar to Malzberg's.'

****

A MELANGE-A-TROIS OR MORE

WHAT DOES WOMAN WANT?
By Timothy Leri
88 Books, POB 632, Pleasant Hill, ORE 97401. $10.00

Reviewed By Robert Anton Wilson

This book is presented as a manuscript which fell through a space-time warp from the Vidalian solar system in 2575. Timothy Leri, the author, is, in some sense, Timothy Leary, the Harvard psychologist, LSD researcher, counter-culture guru, international fugitive, etc. Timothy Leri is also a galactic agent assigned to a primitive and barbaric planet, Sol-3, with the assignment of mutating it from mammalian (emotional) consciousness to objective intelligence.

The work itself seems to be composed by Leri, not Leary, but has been edited and commented upon by various interstellar critics and scholars. Some passages are obviously incorporated by mistake (or by the conscious fraud and counterfeiting of texts that bedevils all scholarly attempts to reconstruct events in barbaric periods.

Timofiev, the "acid assassin" hunted by the Soviet secret police, is probably such a forgery -- unless Leri is the forgery and Timofiev is the real origin of this myth cycle. Then, again, according to other chapters, the real man behind the mythology may have been a baseball player having a bad session and being booed by the fans who once cheered him on...

Erudite readers will soon notice another set of problems beyond these obvious historical confusions. Leri, whoever he is, has become blended over the centuries with Dante, James Joyce and Julian the Apostate. (One of the most dramatic verses attributed to him, "Midway through our Life's life, I awoke on a dark planet," is palpably a distortion of Dante...) It is even possible that the conspiracy which attempts to destroy him (i.e. either the MVD or the infamous Nixon-Liddy Gang) is itself a fiction, modeled on Egyptian demonology or William S. Burroughs' Nova Mob.

Behind this web of surface ambiguity (a deadly parody of academic scholarship), Leri's stor- is, mercifully, straightforward, comic, and highly erotic. Commodore Le-

ri, who may be an alias for Captain James Kirk of the S.S. ENTERPRISE, arrives in Switzerland pursued by more conspiracies than the bedevil ed heroes of ILLUMINATUS!

An ambiguous anti-semitic millionaire offers to help him, a professional "information broker" (who sells state secrets of all sorts to the highest bidder) also appears as an ally, and a mysterious and bewitching creature, Joanna (raised by her step-father to be the most intelligent woman on Terra), is also helping him -- or perhaps spying on him for the Vatican. It is also possible that all these allies are actually planning to betray him. In short, the context is, as Leri himself observes, "normal mammalian politics."

In this melodramatic Spy Thriller ambience (which may be an actual description of the actual adventures of a real scientific dissident in our own time), Leri, like Captain Kirk, attempts to be courteous, kindly, and helpful in his dealings with the primitives. Nonetheless, the primate taboo-system is everywhere, and he finds himself imprisoned in 29 separate jails and exploited by scores of lawyers who strip him of the local sacrement ("money").

"The reason Kirk always gets out of jail in 58 minutes," he reflects, "is that he's always a million lightyears from the nearest lawver."

Then another interstellar voyager appears, an enigmatic UFO perhaps modeled on Celtic mythology or the Book of Job, maybe staffed by extra-terrestrial Lesbians (or, at least, that's what the Male Supremicist underground claims.) The UFO announces that all Terran life will be exterminated unless humanity can demonstrate objective intelligence by answering a simple "neurogenetic" test-question which measures evolutionary sophistication. Alas, it is the very question which Freud himself admitted psychology alone can't answer, the title question of the book, WHAT DOES WOMAN WANT?

It would be unfair to reveal any more of the suspenseful and surrealistic plot. It is enough to say that, mingled with the major theme of humanity's search for an answer to the UFO riddle, we are also given (a) a coolly scientific analysis of the real "Timothy Leary's" erotic history from adolescense through LSD and Tantra to the "alchemical mating" with the bewitching and mysterious Joanna, (b) bland instructions on how to brainwash a whole country with LSD, (c) a decoding of the evolutionary allegory hidden in the Tarot cards, (d) a series of shocking revelations about political and psychedelic conspiracies of the past two decades, (e) a whole new philosophy of sex, more radical than anything in Brown, Marcuse, Reich or Masters-Johnson, (f) the most brilliant satire on human chauvinism since Swift, (g) the answer to the title question, and (h) more--- much more...

The last time I visited the imprisoned felon who created (or, as he says, "transcieved" this galactic allegory, I told him, "In this day of Women's Liberation, no other male psychologist would dare to claim he knew the answer to WHAT DOES WOMAN WANT?" He flashed that world-famous Grin, which shows Cosmic Humor according to his admirers and Permanent Brain Damage according to his critics. "Well," he said gently, "other psychologists haven't had as much experience with women as I have."

There you have him in a nutshell. Everything he does is hilarious, provocative, infuriating, dazzling original and sure to keep his fellow scientists arguing for a decade at least. WHAT DOES WOMAN WANT? is all of that, to the nth power.

Oh, yes, it also begins his outline of how humanity can double its IQ, triple its life-span and achieve space migration in this generation in this generation. That is to be continued in his next book, EXO-PSYCHOLOGY.

****

TOPSY TURVY

THE HAB THEORY
By Allan W. Eckert
Little, Brown & Co., 1976, 566 p., $9.95

Reviewed By Ronald R. Lambert

Eckert was four times a Pulitzer Prize nominee, and his characterizations are the best, most fully-dimensionally human, that I have ever seen in an sf novel. Of course, he pays for this in length.

Like virtually all mainstream writers in recent years who have tried their hand at sf, Eckert employs the multiple-viewpoint technique, where about three or four stories are intermixed. This is fast developing into a stereotype with mainstream authors writing sf, but in THE HAB THEORY it is unquestionably the right way to do it.

Despite an opening flaw, the novel is the best sf novel I've read in years. The flaw is the idea that a rational person would decide to shoot the President of the United States with wax bullets to gain attention for his theory. Seems to me if a fellow were shut out of the scientific journals he could always get a fiction writer to write up his ideas as an sf novel, as Eckert has done. (Hmm!)

Eckert has taken the anomalies Erich Von Daniken has exploited and used them to support the thesis of a regularly recurring global cataclysm, as the steadily growing, off-balanc-

ing polar ice caps make the earth wobble and then capsize. The thesis is very credibly presented, and I find myself wondering if Eckert really means it.

Whether the thesis is right or wrong, in my estimation this is sf at its best. It is of the same classic calibre as When Worlds Collide.

****

PROZINE NOTES

By REG

The second and final part of Budry's serial in the August and September issues of F&SF, MICHAELMAS, shows his absolute command of his material,,,and himself, I suppose. He shows an intimacy-interaction between his hidden world manager (the newsmen, Michaelmas) and the tool of control, the super computer intelligence (Domino) that is just right. I read in awe of the intelligence shown and required by Michaelmas---the anticipation, the knowledge, the awareness, the adroit leverages, the skill and experience.... and realize the intelligence and skill necessary on Budry's part to make this apparent to the reader without leaving the reader adrift in confusion and perhaps abject inferiority.

●

Glaaack! Let go! *Urk* Damn it, John Varley! Will you tell your story to take its claws off my throat? Thanks. Wow. "Bagatelle" in the October GALAXY is one hell of a gripping story, you know?

I read your story because a reader of SFR had mentioned that he considered you to be a natural storyteller...(or was it a writer in another fanzine?) I tend to agree. You have the go-for-the-jugular instincts and you have the skills. You don't mess around calling attention to yourself as the writer. Allow me to salute you and be assured I'll be a willing reader from now on. But---could you instruct your stories to be a little less ardent in holding your readers? I've got bruises.

****

FIRST LINES I NEVER FINISHED WRITING

Argot the barbarian felt the trembling in the earth and knew the Purple Horde were

ANGEL FEAR:
A Sort-of Review Column of SF Art

By Freff

Hello there. I am writing in New York, site of the world's most extensive collection of bricks (some of whom are walking the streets without proper institutional care.) I am also near the close of a business trip that started in Alabama, cycled to LA and San Francisco and then here. All by car. Distance driving like that is almost enough to send me catatonic, there being so little time to sort the humongous amounts of visual sensation...of necessity, you are forced to sit back and endure the thousands of miles of movie as it unreels.

So forgive me, but I'm not entirely in the here and now. Visual bombs planted by a Utah sunset or a Denver street corner are just now exploding in my head; 23,000 words of articles for Marvel must be typed by Friday; and I'm trying to prevent myself from buying a magnificent set of African mahogany tone blocks I came across recently in a Village music store.

Is it surprising, then, that I prefer foundation-digging to specific reviews?

****

FLASHBACK DEPARTMENT: The first SF cover painting I ever noticed as a child was on FANTASTIC (or was it AMAZING?) and it illustrated Ellison's "Paingod." It was awesome---a brooding and somehow sadly malignant alien loomed over the planet Earth, which was trapped inside a precise, glowing crystal. This particular little kid sat in front of the drug store magazine rack and knew that before him was the greatest painting he had ever seen.

It was, of course, crap. I can see that now. Crudely painted over a cruder design. But at that time it did for me what a good piece of SF Art should always do, completely apart from its technical achievements, and that is turn on the imagination. It was bad, but boy, was it full of wonder.

This month's magazines score mostly low in that department, I am afeared. Let's look at the October covers on F&SF, ANALOG, and GALAXY.

F&SF is celebrating an anniversary with this issue, and since they usually try and make it a special issue all around I was particularly looking forward to this cover. But it is extremely disappointing. It's creator, Chesley Bonestell, is well-known and respected, a pioneer of his craft, but all that notwithstanding what we have here is competently done and dull. We are presented with a space probe of conventional design, greenish in color and largely in shadow, scooting across the crescent disc of a cratered planet, also green. The painting is so calm as to be lifeless, and although it is not unpleasing to the eye it does not serve to attract it, either. For Bonestell this is no better than an exercise; perhaps it is a rough, instead of a finished painting. F&SF has done that before.

Vincent DiFate's cover for ANALOG is surprisingly similar. This time the spaceship is white, made of connected cylinders, and the crescent disc it shoots by is red. I grant that this has more tension to it than the Bonestell. The strong red-white-black contrast, combined with the rocket's thrust (as opposed to the probe's drift) make it a better magazine cover...but it, too, is intrinsically dull. Part of this stems from the painting technique, which I think walks the wrong line between stylishly simplified and completely realistic. The result is the kind of competent but uninspiring tech illustration that you find in NASA publicity material or on the walls of Air Force Colonel's offices. DiFate can and has done much better.

GALAXY, after the other two, is a flawed pleasure. Steve Fabian painted this one as an illustration to Niven's CHILDREN OF THE STATE. The overriding color is magenta, with deep blue shadows providing some contrast. An old man stares out in frozen surprise on a fanciful, elven city beneath a bloated and glowing star. This is not a perfect painting. No way. Fabian worked it in oils---or so it looks---and the glow of the star could have been smoother, more calmly eerie. The city shapes are futuristic ala 1940 (an affliction Fabian and Freas both fall for too often) and the human is too stiffly formed. But despite these objections this painting, as a cover, as an SF cover, is a success the other two can not match. This one has the emotion in it already, like the "Paingod" cover that struck me years ago, and it will communicate itself to the casual browser. The others are just decorations.

To use a musical analogy, the first two are Muzak. Only Fabian crafts a pleasant song.

****

Remember the old days? Remember books with (gasp) illustrations? Of course, they are still there in certain markets---childrens' books, for one---but to we fanciers of genre fiction it has been a long time since word and line shared a book between them. Luckily, in small ways, that is changing. More and more publishers are realizing that with offset printing a page of art isn't a hell of a lot different than a page of text, and better, that people like illustrations. They help sell books.

Terry Carr and Don Wollheim (both when at ACE, the latter now at DAW) have done their bit to keep the tradition alive. Now Sharon Jarvis, at Doubleday, is bringing limited illustration back to the SF hardback.

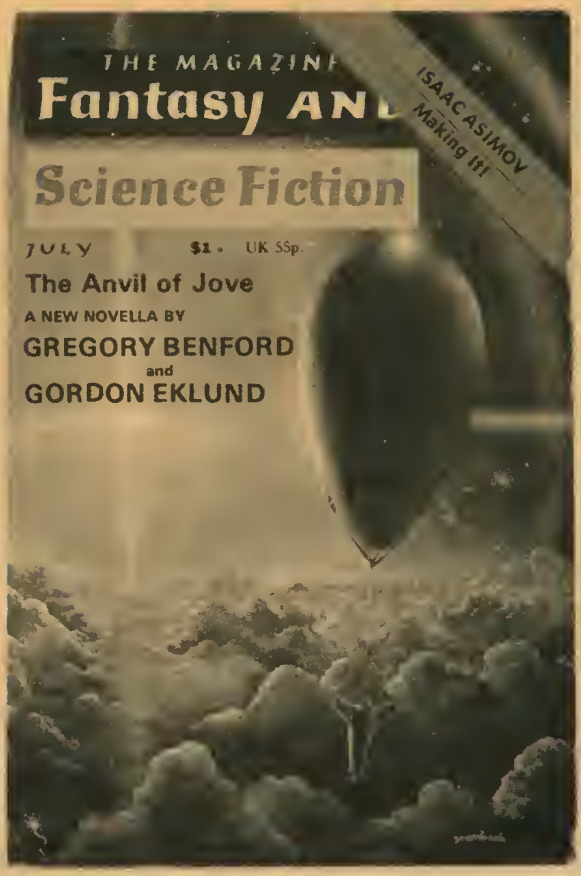
I have here a copy of a new Doubleday book, Gordon Eklund's THE GRAYSPACE BEAST. Its cover is a typical ugly Doubleday cover---Sharon is, sadly, not in charge of external packaging. (I have talked to the woman who is. She is a nice enough person who has no idea what SF is all about and whose taste in art direction I find abominable, most of the time. So it goes.) What distinguishes THE GRAYSPACE BEAST is that it has a frontispiece illustration by Rick Sternbach, the first of many planned by Sharon. It is, after all, her only chance to get a proper illustration of the story in somewhere, since the cover won't be...

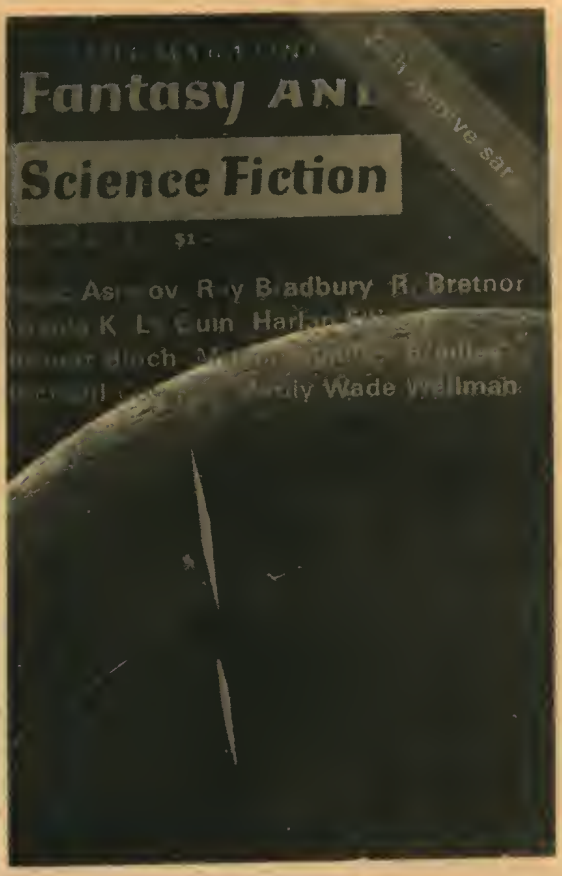
The problem at Doubleday is that it prints by letterpress, not offset. This raises the expense of printing artwork and limits the possible techniques. Solid blacks are verboten. Tiny lines, or lines too close together, likewise. But at least it is an illustration.

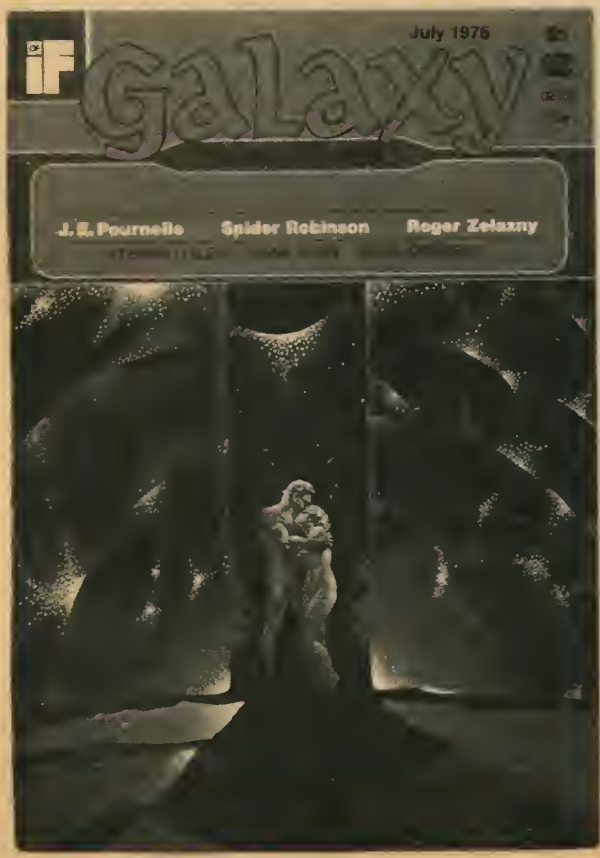
And for a few books something more is planned. Tom Monteleone is editing an anthology for Doubleday called THE ARTS AND BEYOND: VISIONS OF MAN'S ESTHETIC FUTURE, each story in which has been illustrated by a young artist from a New York art school. Some are good, some are terrible, all are a bit different for the field. There will be a hardback WHISPERS, edited by Stuart Schiff, with "lots of illoes" and a color cover. If these sell well it might just convince the bosses at Doubleday to try a couple of other volumes.

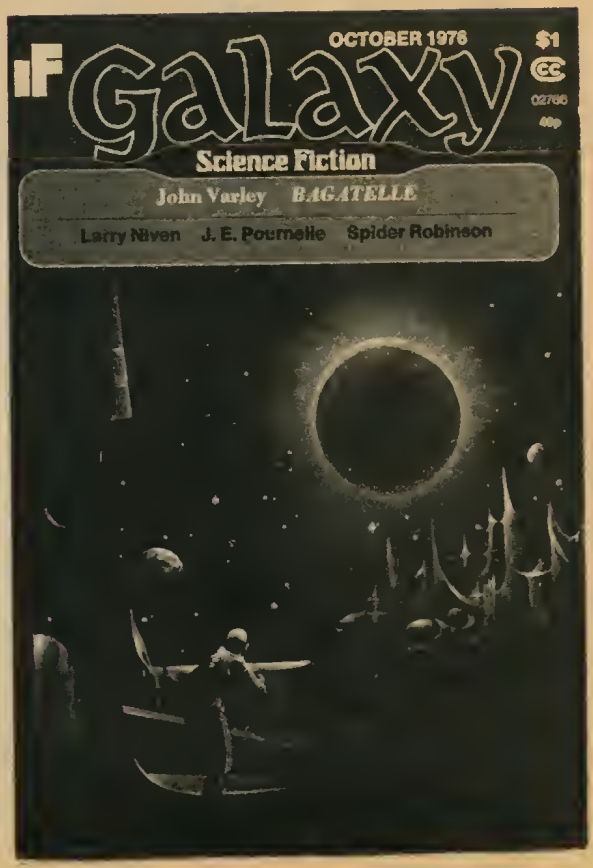
In the meantime I am doing the frontispiece for Steven G. Spruill's KEEPERS OF THE GATE and daydreaming, along with Sharon, of someday creating a profusely-illustrated one-volume version of Zelazny's AMBER. Fools and madmen aim high. More power to them.

****


THE MAGAZINE
Fantasy AND
Science Fiction
ISAAC ASIMOV
Making It!
JULY
$1.
UK 55p.
The Anvil of Jove
A NEW NOVELLA BY
GREGORY BENFORD
and
GORDON EKLUND


Fantasy AND
Science Fiction
$1
Ray Bradbury
Wade Wellman


IF
July 1976
Galaxy
J.E. Pournelle
Spider Robinson
Roger Zelazny


IF
OCTOBER 1976
$1
Galaxy
Science Fiction
John Varley
BAGATELLE
Larry Niven
J. E. Pournelle
Spider Robinson

SCALPELS IN THE NIGHT, CALMLY DISSECTING etc., to be hummed to the Frank Sinatra tune of almost the same name. I want to talk about a whole bunch of new people to watch (or watch out) for. They are all people who deserve detailed analysis and I'll probably come back to them as I learn more of their working habits; but for now, a sketch of likes and dislikes. Future columns will expand on the theme.

BORIS VALLEJO is rapidly shaping up as the best Frazetta-style artist around. He is far from perfect, but has one characteristic which endears him to me over Frazetta himself. Boris' anatomy is not totally ludicrous; sometimes it is even excellent! Look at the cover he did for the recent Ballantine reissue of DAVY, which is wonderful, surviving even the lousy blurbs. If he continues in this direction, creating more believable human beings, and finds his own peculiarly individual brushstrokes---*ah*--I will wait and hope.

THE BROTHERS HILDEBRANDT are still-life painters, dammit, and I fail to see why they are used so much. For one thing, they have no feeling for SF machinery, and everything they do is static, flat, washed out: Southern California on a hazy day. Zelazny's MY NAME IS LEGION, or Meridith's RUN, COME SEE JERUSALEM are excellent examples of the Hildebrandts at their very lowest...and then, just when my fangs have extended to their full length and I feel like tearing up the next painting of theirs that I see, they come up with something like STELLAR 2 cover that Jon described last issue, or the matched paintings for THE EARLY DEL RAY volumes. Which are very good indeed. Why so bad one time, so good the next?

(I think the reason behind it all is a failure of a less visible art, that of art direction itself. The hardest task of an art director may well be that of matching the proper artist to the proper work. You don't ask Alexander Calder to illustrate Grimm's Fairy Tales, or Kelly Freas to do a cover for the music of Stockhausen. This matching job is critical, and Ballantine is doing very poorly at it. Their success rate is low. And though I admit that their successes are glorious ones, think of MY NAME IS LEGION, THE LONG ARM OF GIL HAMILTON, NERVES, and so many others! Pfui, as Nero Wolfe would say. Ballantine seems to be aiming at a sort of false nostalgia in its blurbs and covers, and to a certain extent in the books it has chosen to publish. It is notable that the only success they've had with that tone of editorial voice has been the recent reissue of MARTIANS, GO HOME, which brought back the original Freas cover. Let it serve as a lesson...the past is the past, and imitating it without missing the point entirely is very hard to do. (Conversely, kudos to the art director at Ace for his artist choices on Leiber's THE MIND SPIDERS, Dick's SIMULACRA and DR. BLOODMONEY and hell, nearly all the Dick rereleases. And

more of the same to the person at Bantam who chose Pauline Ellison's rich, moody work for LeGuin. These are cases where the artwork is fresh, exciting, and absolutely appropriate for marketing the stuff in 1976. These are the covers that 20 years from now we will be nostalgic about, and other---lesser---artists will imitate.)

STEVE FABIAN I have trouble with. I freely confess to not liking most of his work, for a variety of reasons. One is that "false nostalgia." Steve draws a world of the future that is 20 years old. This is a trait he shares with Freas, but unlike Kelly he does so with a vague and gauzy texture that puts me off, like looking at an acceptable nude photo taken through a vaseline-smeared lens. I think this imprecision in his drawing is his worst handicap, but I keep seeing things that give me hope...the startling green cover on a recent GALAXY, his scratchboard work for the first installment of CHILDREN OF THE STATE...these are strong pieces. Final short comments: his cartooning (for me) is terribly out of date, and I keep getting the impression that he has little feeling for faces. All those not taken from direct photo reference share a certain mushy quality. And perhaps the 1940s-50s movie star look will be the standard of female beauty in the future, but I sincerely hope not.

DARREL K. SWEET does covers for Ballantine. They are very well-drawn. They are painted with a smooth and technical precision I envy. Sweet knows his textures; fur, cloth, leather, skin, feather...and despite all of this his covers are so bloody bland I can't enjoy the good points. He suffers from a stiffness akin to the Hildebrandts, and I wish that once, just once, he would let rip with some really bright colors and dynamic shapes. He has done two or three very good things (A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST and A CASE OF CONSCIENCE come to mind; the latter is the best cover that book has ever had.) But for the rest? In two cases I can think of using Sweet was a crime, and they are THE GODWHALE and A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE. I find the loss most painful on the Peter Beagle book, where the new cover reduces a sad and ghostly love story to a pastel mishmash of TOPPER, Forest Lawn, and the Wildlife Album. (The vicious tone you hear is the pain of a reader who feels one of his favorite books has been undeservedly ravaged. I was afraid for THE LAST UNICORN until I saw that Ballantine had had the sense to just change the type, keeping the magical Gallardo cover it was first published with.) Darrel, if you are out there I want particularly to talk with you, to understand your whys and wherefores. I suspect we have radically different philosophies on the way paint presents emotion.

Lastly consider RICK STERNBACH, who came out of nowhere a little over three years ago, armed with temperas and an airbrush, and has since become the youngest Big Name in the field (much the same way that I am the youngest Non-name.) Several months ago Rick had covers on three major prozines at once; a first, I believe. His forte is the astronomical painting, at which he is much livlier than Bonestell. His black and white work is considerably less together, and his anatomy, while improving, is poor. Rick admits he likes the hardware best, and it shows in very nuts-and-bolts spaceships that I wish would become more fanciful. Sternbach's major evolution as an artist seems to be in his judgment. He is learning what he can and can't do, and waiting until he is good at a new technique or texture before unveiling it. The only exception I know of, the clouds in his "Anvil of Jove" cover for F&SF earlier this year, was one of those bits of prayer and inspiration that work beautifully. (Rather a pity it was printed so muddily. The original is a gem.) Other times he has taken chances to less happy effect. The September GALAXY cover shows a marvelous scene inside a holographic projection control room that is blown badly for me by the poor painting of the human central character. People and fabric are not planets and can't be modeled the same way.

Me I'll leave to the mercy of those I've covered. For what it is worth, I consider my problems to be huge in all departments, and I doubt my detractors can match my own self-criticism. But I'll sure as hell learn from your attempts. The address for brickbats is 211 Highland Drive, Enterprise AL 36330.

****

A batch of miscellaneous notes to close the column for this time:

The Freas interview in this issue was originally supposed to be contrasted with an interview with Mike Hinge, who is Kelly's opposite number if ever there was one. Kelly is at the top of the field; Mike has been scrounging along on the bottom level of survival for some time. This is his particular karma, I suppose, and it arises from the way he deals with art directors, agents, editors, and so on. Mike is given to knowing what is best and acting on it, and to hell with other opinions. This is laudable enough. Sometimes. But so often he takes it to what I consider ridiculous extremes...when I asked to interview him for SFR he responded by refusing on the grounds that Geis was a ripoff artist---that he reprints covers without permission and thus violates copyright.

So what? Library Journal and Publisher's Weekly reprint material without permission. I thought it was implicit in the fact that a cover is meant as a form of advertising that it be encouraged to show up in as many different places as possible! It is hardly as though Geis was selling posters of these works and turning a profit that the artist never sees. They go to illustrate points of a review. They enlarge, by a small percentage, the number of people who know of an artist and may gain interest in his work. I see his as a service, not a disservice, and there I think that Mike is wrong, much as I like him. Lastly, Mike, I cannot understand denying yourself a forum to speak from and to help spread the ideas you think are so important. Ah, well---c'est la guerre.

Have you all noticed the covers of Berkeley's THE SINS OF OUR FATHERS and ALPHA 6? The cover for SINS is actually a few square inches of a larger painting used in full on ALPHA! The Berkeley art director insists that it was done with Powers' full knowledge, and that he was paid twice. I certainly hope so. (It is effective, I admit, and it makes me wonder just how much previous Powers work on pb covers has actually been part of a greater whole?)

*Richard and Ginger Garrison (PO Box 721, Forest Park GA 30050) are publishing an SF calendar which I know almost nothing about save that Hinge, Rick Bryant, Kelly Freas and several other good SF artists are involved. Check with them for details---the edition is going to be limited, if my source is correct.

The new "look" to the GALAXY logo is the responsibility of a British artist named Ames, (Andrew Stephenson), who has also been doing interior work. I like it a lot. Now if only they could unclutter the masthead by dropping the sign with the clumsy "worlds of if" lettering...

And we end our column from glorious New Yawk with an Art Director Story. It seems that Herb Stolz at ANALOG was always giving Mike Hinge a rough time whenever he brought in an assignment. Stolz would not be satisfied. He would not be able to be clear about his dissatisfaction, either, and would usually end up pointing to a Schoenherr as a sample of RIGHT artwork. As far as Hinge could see the only difference (apart from stylistic considerations), was the Schoenherr's illoes were BIG, and his were same-size. So the next assignment he turned in, he turned in BIG. Stolz - of course - loved it.

And you thought SF art made any sense? Nobody here but us irrational human beings, which is precisely why I rail about working that sense of wonder into our art. Farewell 'till next time.

****

TO ALL PRESENT & FUTURE SUBSCRIBERS

IF YOU MOVE I NEED YOUR FORMER ZIP-CODE AS WELL AS YOUR NEW COMPLETE ADDRESS. FAILURE TO COMPLY BRINGS A VISIT FROM THE DREADED GENTLEMAN PICTURED BELOW, WITH HIS DEADLY SMITH & CRANSTON .68 AUTOMATIC.

PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS AND MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW.

PLEASE SEND ALL MAIL TO:

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW
P.O. BOX 11408
PORTLAND, OR 97211

This Publication is Available in MICROFORM

...from

Xerox University Microfilms

300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

Xerox University Microfilms
35 Mobile Drive
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M4A 1H6

University Microfilms Limited
St. John's Road,
Tyler's Green, Penn,
Buckinghamshire, England

PLEASE WRITE FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION

FREAS By FREFF: The Young Turk Interviews the Older Turk

(A wee bit of preface, maestro: any friend of mine will tell you I am a great fan of beginnings. I like to trace out the intricate threads of the world until I can see how things got started and why. This is slightly obsessive, but what the hell; it beats being in love with carburetors or collecting the underwear of nuns...Frank Kelly Freas is one of my beginnings. His art turned me on when I was younger. He was the man who looked at my sketchpad and said "Move to New York!" And because he is charming and funny and has a fantastic wife and gorgeous daughter, I can forgive him the talent that makes me plot the breaking of his fingers---slowly.

(Oh, yes,---his cover for George RR Martin's "Second Kind of Lonliness"---((ANALOG, Geis, but I forget which month, please fill it in---))* IS THE SINGLE FINEST PIECE OF SF art in the past decade.

((I don't have that issue, but I'm sure one of the readers will send along the information.))*

(This "interview"/conversation was taped in late April, 1976, in Kelly's Virginia Beach home, with lots of kibitzers.)

●

FREFF: Okay, Kelly, background! Where did you sprout from, anyway?

FREAS: I was born in New York but raised in Canada. I came back to the United States to go work.

FREFF: And how long ago was that?

FREAS: Much too long. Longer than I could possibly remember.

FREFF: Hmm. All right, then, when was it that you started doing professional artwork?

FREAS: At the age of four, I believe it was. Nursery school...although I didn't make much money then. My first serious business venture was in second grade, when I was selling my classmates copies of Mickey Mouse. I was caught by the teacher and she confiscated my entire inventory, putting me out of business...for a while.

FREFF: So what kind of art training were you getting as you grew up?

FREAS: Severe. The usual run of high school courses, science-oriented primarily, because I really didn't decide to become an artist until I was full-grown. My mother flatly told me that what I should do was learn a respectable trade, so that I could earn a living, and then I could paint on Sundays to amuse myself. It was the attitude that seemed to be held by most of the people around me, most of my life.

FREFF: So what finally made that decision seem viable---going into art instead of a trade?

FREAS: Specifically, I think I made the decision to go into art when I found out that I hated just about everything else.

FREFF: That implies you tried other things for a while.

FREAS: I was in a machine shop for a while. I was a welder, and I got quite active in union business. I even became an organizer. Though I didn't know it at the time the company felt that it might profit more from me by putting me in public relations. Which they did. I didn't know when I took the job that it meant I could no longer be in the union, but I was getting twice the pay, so when I found out I didn't complain too much. This was for Curtis-Wright in Columbus, Ohio, and it is where I really began my career in professional art. I went on from there to do the usual nuts and bolts commercial advertising work, everything from car cards and 24-sheet billboards to drawings for catalogs, jewelry renderings, that sort of thing. Eventually, after the war, I got around to going to art school, which took me to Pittsburgh. I was already established as a practicing freelance when I started, so I was able to build a business quite effectively while in school.

FREFF: We still haven't gotten to your entrance into science fiction. Were you doing it then for your own pleasure?

FREAS: I didn't do any work for my own pleasure. I took my pleasure in other ways. If you'll just stop for a moment to think of my schedule... I was up at seven o'clock to get downtown, have my breakfast, and start school by nine. I'd get out at 4:30, have dinner, and be at work at 6:30. This didn't give me much time for any sort of entertainment. But I did get some enjoyment out of some of my work. At one point I was designing slot machines, although it ended up on the bottom of the Monongehela River. But while it lasted it was fun. I got my first experience with art silk-screening on that job, where I had to screen seventeen transparent colors onto glass, to be lighted from the back. You don't make any mistakes.

FREFF: So where did SF come in, hah? Here you are, the winner of God-only-knows how many Hugos---

FREAS: Only nine.

FREFF: Only nine---more than anybody else---and all you were doing then was slot machines and ad art?

FREAS: Ah, but I was reading SF. I started reading it practically as soon as I started reading. Burroughs mostly, and before I could buy the magazines I was reading my uncle's.

He was a smart cookie---wouldn't allow any of them out of the house. So if I wanted to read them, I had to go there after school; it saved a lot of magazines for him. I think at that point I developed a feeling for SF in general that stuck with me the rest of my life. There were long periods when I didn't read anything else at all. My interest was such that when it occurred to me to be an illustrator it never really occurred to me to become any other kind. As a commercial artist I had been doing all kinds of work that would, eventually, contribute to my science fiction.

Examples: at one time I was doing a lot of heavy equipment illustration, which of course lent itself very well to SF. Another job was taking blueprints and drawing three-dimensional shaded drawings from them, so that people who were looking for a particular part would be able to see it and find it quickly. It was tricky. But the curious part of it was that I could see the part in my mind. And it would come out in proportion! That was the weird thing, because if I had tried to measure it all I'd have botched it completely. I had a stint as a layout man in the machine shop for a while, and I was absolutely terrible at it. The boss said I couldn't measure twelve inches with a foot ruler, and he was right.

FREFF: So you decided to become an SF artist. Bully for you. But HOW?

FREAS: I was in art school at the time. A friend of mine named Chuck Kennedy, an ex-classmate who had taken off for New York, came back for a visit, saw a picture I was working on, and said, "Hey! That's just the sort of thing that WEIRD TALES would like." So I sent it in and they said, "We love it," although I had to make one minor correction, bringing the central figure out from the background, because their three-color process reproduction couldn't distinguish the subtle tones. This painting was of Pan dancing in the moonlight, playing a clarinet. It came out on the November, 1950, issue, and I didn't do another one for exactly one year.

FREFF: How much did you get for it?

FREAS: Fifty bucks.

FREFF: Did you get the original back?

FREAS: I did, yes. This was not standard. Most of the time you did not get the originals back. They were very sticky about it. I discovered later that every once in a while, whenever the storage space was all cluttered up with paintings, they would have a burning in the incinerator or the back alley and just clear everything out. The thought of giving them back, however, was anathema. This didn't begin to change until the late fifties, early sixties. The leader in the change was Street and Smith, who bought only first rights, didn't require that a bill be submitted---they gave you a work order---automatically paid you when the job was delivered, and automatically returned the artwork to you when it came back from the printer. This was real strange at the time because everyone was working peculiar ways of their own. But S&S had it down to a science. It was very pleasant.

FREFF: And when did this delightful circumstance become standard for you. That is to say, when did you start with ASTOUNDING? That's where you made your rep.

FREAS: I had been in New York a couple of years before I started working for Campbell. I hadn't gone near it; I'd worked for everyone else in the field, either covers or illustrations, but I wouldn't go near ASTOUNDING because I had already gone through the experience, which I have described elsewhere, of sending a portfolio to Campbell which was not to his taste. When I got it back the covering letter burned my ears sufficiently that I stayed away for quite a while. Finally, Polly said, "What is he going to do, eat you or something?" "Yes, I expect so!" "Well, go in anyway." It was easier to go see him than to argue with her, so I took a portfolio in and surprisingly enough instead of eating me alive he was quite charming, went over my whole portfolio with me, took me to lunch, and gave me a job to do. That was the beginning of a friendship that spanned the rest of Campbell's life and which I enjoyed thoroughly. I hadn't even gotten the first assignment done when I got a phone call asking if I would have time to do a cover. "Mr. Freas? Mr. Freas? Are you there, Mr. Freas?" I was absolutely stunned. "Oh,...I was just checking my calendar to see if I had time to take it on..." I would have paid them to do a cover. That "The Gulf Between," Oct., '53.

FREFF: You also are well-remembered for all the work for Mad. When did you start there?

FREAS: '55 or '56.

FREFF: And who designed Alfred E. Neuman?

FREAS: He floated around for years and years. He wasn't designed; he sort of accumulated. We tracked him officially to 1917, but I have seen postcards and newspapers that go back into the 1880's. While we were living in Mexico I was seriously tempted to dig up some pre-columbian pottery with Alfred E. Neuman's face on it. Fortunately, I resisted the impulse.

FREFF: Many artists can break down their careers into periods. Do you? And when do you think you've done your best work?

FREAS: I think my best period is, oh, roughly from 1975 to 1976. I expect next year to be better, though.. I cannot say I could break it down into periods when I did or did not enjoy my work, or did better or worse. There have been periods in which I did a different kind of thing, but if I had to break it down into more concrete periods...well: The Astounding Period, the Mad Period, the Mexico Period---that was where I had simply reached the point where I could not generate another idea to save my soul. It was accumulated future shock. Unless you are completely involved in SF illustration you can't realize how true the description of future shock is. What we had to do was build a complete structure of the world of the story we were illustrating. You would saturate yourself in this, learn all its details, then have to immediately put it down and build a whole new one for the next story. You never had time to get your feet on the ground in the real world. There was no balance to it whatsoever.

FREFF: I would like to hear more about Mexico. You almost died as an artist then, right?

FREAS: For all practical purposes that is what happened. You could almost call it a kind of creative constipation, with a million ideas crowding in and blocking every avenue of communication. But none of them were science fiction ideas. I had been doing a bit of other work, but nothing that really made any difference, so I decided it was time to quit and get out and go to Mexico and paint for a year. I did some religious work, some abstract---mostly I painted my own psychotherapy.

FREFF: What finally brought you out of Mexico?

FREAS: I went broke.

FREFF: That's all?

FREAS: Well, possibly the fact that my children were forgetting how to speak English had something to do with it...they really were, too; they started school in a Mexican school and learned Spanish very well. But without Americans to play with they were gradually forgetting. More than that, though, the most important thing was that I was simply running out of money and I had to come home and go to work. At that time, at least, it was not possible for me to work in Mexico legally, and I was in no position to work illegally.

FREFF: Err...that's not quite how I heard it, Kelly. Didn't you do a lot of Mad covers from there through some obscure means?

FREAS: Yes, but it was a very painful operation. And about that time I severed connections with Mad because it was interfering in the work I was trying to do. It was also a problem, getting the pictures out of the country. You could carry the entire countryside out in the trunk of your car, and nobody would care, but if you try and mail a painting the roof falls in.

FREFF: The answer was tourist express?

FREAS: That's what I would do. They would pass from hand to hand and then be mailed at the nearest post office on the other side of the border. One picture passed through six different sets of hands before it finally ended up in San Pedro. It didn't arrive in New York when it was supposed to so we started checking up, traced it to San Pedro and the girl who had taken it there, and she said, "Oh, yes, it is still in my suitcase! I forgot all about it!" It finally got to Mad just in time for their deadline. None of the paintings ever missed an issue, but they went by some peculiar routes.

FREFF: I'm going to change the topic completely. When did you marry Polly?

FREAS: (pause) Son of a Bitch! We forgot it again!

FREFF: (with slowly dawning understanding) Your...anniversary?

POLLY FREAS: Today.

FREAS: The 27th? I thought it was the 26th. Are you sure...(domestic discussion ensues, concluding in Kelly offering Polly a glass of wine.)

FREFF: Hrrumph. Yes. And what effect did she have on your business, on your life? I know you have two children, but other than that.

FREAS: Oh, she had very little effect on my business (cough)...she took over the accounts first thing and checked up what I had been doing the year before. She discovered that the year before I had kept very good records, done a very careful job setting up my books. I had added up all my expenses for the year and added up all my income for the year and then I had added the two together and paid tax on both. At that point she took over the books, the income tax, and the business.

(Misc. laughter, hooting, and applause---for Polly.)

FREAS: And she's been handling it ever since.

POLLY FREAS: That's why we're solvent.

FREAS: She did more than just keep books. When she had more free time than she does now she used to model for most of my work, both male and female. Particularly after I got the Polaroid, since she refused to pose for sketches after she nearly broke her neck posing for a corpse in my first ANALOG picture. The Polaroid ruined my photographic technique, but it helped my drawing considerably.

FREFF: What is your work schedule like?

FREAS: Every hour available, every day. It works out to fourteen to fifteen hours a day, although it feels like eighteen. I'm up around nine o'clock and at work at the drawing board about noon after messing around with letters and so forth and I will be at the drawing board until about one in the morning. Time out for dinner, of course. If I'm on a really heavy schedule I'll push it until three or four in the morning, because I find that the night time is the most creative time. I can do routine work and rendering very readily during the daytime, but for the idea work I prefer to work after midnight.

FREFF: And how much time to you spend on a painting?

FREAS: I try and figure on having six weeks lead time, from getting the manuscript to delivering it. Of this six weeks most of the time will be spent thinking about it, reading, sketching, and then a relatively small amount of time on the actual painting. On the other hand I'm just as likely as not to get the painting

up to the moment of almost-completion and then have to scrap the whole thing. This is where I act more like a fan than a professional. From my way of thinking a professional has to know when to cut his losses and quit. You never produce a picture that is exactly what you want, but you have to know when to stop arguing with yourself and say, "This is the way a part of me decided to do it." But every once in a while something about a picture will bug me so much that rather than try and correct it I will scrap it and begin again.

FREFF: Any notorious examples come to mind?

FREAS: Yes. Brian Stableford's WATCHGOD'S CARGO. I scrapped that one twice before I settled on the version I did, and I still wasn't satisfied. My painting was just not up to the vision.

FREFF: Let's talk techniques. What are your favorite media in color and black and white?

FREAS: I do my cover sketches, as a rule, in tempera---especially Shiva Nu-Tempera, because it is usable with both brush and airbrush without having to spend a lot of time cleaning the blasted machinery. I tend to use acrylics on the larger work. My favorite b&w form, I suppose, would be a very very delicate drybrush used in the manner of Ed Cartier. Most of the pictures I have done in this technique have been somewhat on the cartoonish side, which is really unfair to it. I used to do a lot of scratchboards, but if you are going to do it the way I like to see it done, it is too slow to be practical. I love Finley's work; I think he is probably the greatest penman this century has produced. But to spend three days on an illustration is just not practical any more.

FREFF: You like Finley. Who else do you think great, or for that matter, terrible?

FREAS: When I was a student Ed Cartier was, to me, a little tin god. NOBODY could draw like Cartier. His one technique I tried very hard to master and in some cases succeeded, but not as often as I would like. I tried to imitate Finley too, but after having one picture drag on for a week and still not be finished, what with all the little dots I was putting in, I decided that this was just not for me.

FREFF: Andrew Wyeth, among other artists, likes to have a painting a round to come back to, to nibble on...

FREAS: I do this. If you'll look over there you'll see a picture with a date spanning four years...the picture is painting itself. Every once in a while it tells me what it wants done with it.

FREFF: Did you ever really hate the work of any of your contemporaries?

FREAS: Fifth Amendment. The only thing I find objectionable is a lack of sincerity and a lack of application. I'm perfectly willing to allow anybody any peculiarities of technique, or stylization, or philosophical approach. But I demand that they be honest about what they are doing. But going back to artists I like...the problems with the upcoming ones are not which I like, but which I could leave out. There are so many damned good ones that I think the field looks more promising now than it has in any time in the past 30 years. When I came into the field there weren't any SF artists. There were a lot of good, professional pulp artists, but there weren't five who considered themselves SF artists or even wanted to consider themselves that. But now we have Whelan, Kirk--who is more a fantasy artist, from my point of view---and DiFate, who is the best around right now, I think. The problem is that a science fiction illustrator is a very different breed of cat. In order to really be on you have to be as involved with science as with picture-making; but if you let the science take over it screws up your picture-making completely. It is a very very fine line to walk, and I do it only by the simple exped-

ient of falling off on both sides at once.

FREFF: Money, Kelly, money! You got $50 for your first cover; what now?

FREAS: I demand a minimum of $450, for either reproduction or resale. I learned a long time ago that one of the things you had to keep in mind was that, regardless of the job, there are a certain number of things you have to do to get started on it. The minute I pick up a pencil it costs $25, and when I reach for a brush it costs another $25. This is the only practical way to approach commercial art of any sort. You have to decide that if you just read the damned story it has taken enough time that you have to figure your cost into it. This leaves you with establishing a certain minimum below which you can not drop and still manage to make it.

FREFF: You do a hell of lot of work every year. Always have done it, so far as I can see. It would seem that a project that ran longer than you thought would make for trouble.

FREAS: I've had paintings drag along for three or four weeks...the second cover for DOUBLE STAR was almost four weeks of steady work. I didn't do anything else during that time! It wasn't that the cover was all that great---it was okay---but that every single detail in it caused me trouble. I found a model for the character and did what was essentially a portrait of him; the character was a descendant of William of Orange, my model was a descendant etc. The character in the story was a model railroad buff, so I picked up bits of railroad equipment, one locomotive in particular which was worth fifteen dollars then and is now worth 4500 or so because they only made a few of the kits...anyway, I drew it so accurately that it is recognizable to model train collectors as being that particular one. Everything on that cover took twice as long as it should have. On the other hand, the first painting I did---the Pan with the clarinet---was done in a matter of a day, something like that. I don't set out with a definite limit on time. The picture takes as long to do as it demands.

FREFF: But what about deadlines?

FREAS: I never make a deadline. I never miss one, either. Deadlines, to me, are sacrosanct. I take it for granted when I begin a job that the buyer has left himself a certain amount of buffer zone. Either he is giving me a job that isn't scheduled or that is scheduled far enough ahead that he knows he will have it in plenty of time. I will aim at the date he gives me. If within a few days of that date I know I'm not going to make it I call up and find out how much more time I can have, and this time he'll tell me exactly when it has to be in, and it will be. I have never left somebody waiting for the boat.

FREFF: Do you consider yourself primarily a brush man, in your color work?

FREAS: I use a palette knife a lot, and the airbrush---though I try to keep it in bounds---but primarily, yes, the brush is my tool. Some day though, when I have nothing better to do, I'm going to knock off a completely airbrush painting. Just to show how I think it ought to be used, which no one is doing these days. The real airbrush experts vanished sometime in the early sixties. All you have now is a bunch of photo retouchers. Want to see some good airbrush work? Whether you like the style of artwork or not is immaterial, but go back to Alex Schomberg's work in the late 40's, early 50's. There was a man who knew how to handle an airbrush! But I am not fond of the type of thing he did---SF still-lifes, by and large, do not thrill me. Nor am I that fascinated by highly-polished machinery.

FREFF: Sue me for a heretic, Kelly, but you do a lot of highly-polished machinery.

FREAS: Yeah, but if you look closer you'll notice that there are an awful lot of scratches inside that polish. I have a love for textures. I like my machinery to look as though it has done something. I like a knife-blade with scratches on it, that shows it has been sharpened. It has worked! I like that feeling.

FREFF: What do you see as the SF illustrator's prime problem? Or problems?

FREAS: The major problem is keeping ahead of yourself. You are working right on the edge of technology. To me, research is extremely important. Making my pictures as technically correct as I can without spoiling the picture is a definite objective for me. And where you are working with something on that edge, where do you go to get the information you need? Once I was trying to get something on fluidics, but it was new enough that nothing, really, had been published. And at the time I did Haldeman's "Hero" there was very little in print on black holes. This puts you in the spot of trying to do something that will satisfy you, your editor, and the reader. Every once in a while you hit it and it is a great feeling even though you know it was purely accidental...

FREFF: You've been steadily releasing prints the last few years; so have other artists. Why did you start? Are you getting what you want out of it?

FREAS: The essential part of this is that I was so unhappy with the reproduction I got...people would see book and magazine covers that were only half the picture, or so badly reproduced that you had no idea what color the original might have been. I really wanted to get some good, big copies of my pictures so that people could see them the way they were supposed to be. You know the story of the cover that was printed upside down and backwards ((("Hero"))); this was the sort of thing I wanted to correct. Polly and I now have 24 prints and 8 postcards. We don't keep a running check on sales but I can tell you that each is a limited edition by anyone's standards, because our print order was only 2000 a print. We make just enough money from one set to put into the next. The way it began was that we had an extremely unpleasant experience with a retirement plan, in which we lost about as much money as we put in. After that we thought about it and realized that stocks and bonds were just not for us, that the best investment we could make would be in our own work. At that point we stopped selling pictures and started making prints instead, figuring that the prints couldn't do anything but appreciate in value.

FREFF: So you aren't selling any originals at all now?

FREAS: A very few. For one thing, it keeps getting harder and harder to part with them. I'm reaching the stage where I am solving problems that interest me very much, technical problems of working with light, the kind of thing that was fascinating years ago when I did the cover for FARMER IN THE SKY, showing a robot crawler going through a field of rubies. The problem of handling the light on the actual transparency of stone, the light shining through the facets...this was pure joy. It was all reasoning. Where are you going to find a model for this sort of thing?

FREFF: Let's at least glance at the LASER situation. What was your reaction to being offered the whole series, instead of having it done by different artists?

FREAS: I said, "Roger, I don't want to do the whole series. I don't want to have anything to do with series. I don't like series." But they asked me to come up to Toronto and look over their operation, which I did, and they explained what they were trying to do and why...and it sounded like a hell of a good idea to me. They are aiming at a very specific audience. This does not mean that as an artist or writer you are being restricted; it means that you are being asked to develop the skill to communicate to this particular group. You can have an infinite number of ideas to play around with, but you have to approach the group in their own language.

FREFF: But what about doing painting after painting in that same format?

FREAS: That's the funny part of it. Rather than finding it limiting I find it exciting. It presents the challenge of constantly having to make the format look different than it is, but can you think of anything that offers you more variety than a human face? In a sense I am a frustrated portrait artist. Something that hangs on a wall doesn't do so much for me, but a character study like the LASER covers gives me the

opportunity to do portraiture or to invent whoever I want to. And I have considerable freedom with the backgrounds. I'm functioning pretty much as my own art director. I don't have to submit roughs to anybody, or argue about them...

FREFF: Raging envy, but enough of that. Closing comments time, Kelly. What have you waited 25 years to say?

(Polly laughs. Kelly scowls at me.)

FREAS: I'm thinking seriously of becoming a literary critic.

****

SMALL PRESS NOTES BY REG

I suppose in the small press world you can get away with a title like RUNES OF AHRH EIH ECHE, if you have a hardcore group of readers/buyers.

Jonathan Bacon does have such an audience, and RUNES is a selection of letters by Robert E. Howard.

It is a 40 page (8 1/2 x 11) offset book on heavy white stock. It features a cover and 26 illustrations by Randall Spurgin (who is what might be called a 'fairly good pulp illustrator'). There are 26 letters of correspondence from Howard to such people as Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, August Derleth, Carl Jacobi, Farnsworth Wright, Harold Preece and Wilfred Talman. Also (and perhaps most important) are two letters from Howard's father describing the circumstances of Howard's suicide. They are sad and revealing.

In Howard's letters he is a courteous, polite gentleman, with occasional free-spirit enthusiasms and fierce macho. His great interest was in the past: mostly Irish/Celt history and mythology and pride.

I suppose at base he might be considered a mother's boy...and could not survive when it was clear she was about to die. There is real tragedy in his life-flow...and I think a very real degree of honor and integrity.

The reader of Howard's fiction must always regret he died so young.

RUNES costs $2.95 postpaid and is available from Jonathan Bacon, Box 147, Lamoni, IA 50140.

●

TENSION, APPREHENSION & DISSENSION has begun. The first issue of this exceptionally good fan magazine devoted to discussion of sf and sf writing, is a product of two major sf critics: John J. Pierce (of RENAISSANCE fame), and Paul G. Walker (interviewer, contributor to the top fan magazines, including SFR, THE ALIEN CRITIC, LUNA, etc.

They battle back and forth with a major contributor, Thomas J. Roberts, a professor of English at the University of Connecticut.

It is all eye-gluing reading, because these people write well and think well, and what they have to say --what they thrash out between them-- is a series of viewpoints on science fiction and science fiction writing which educate and entertain.

This is not a formal, stultifying magazine. It seethes.

It has a series of up-to-date reviews, too.

I recommend it. Send $2.00 (cash, please, for a while) for four issues to: Paul Walker, 128 Montgomery St., Bloomfield, NJ 07003.

●

THAT WAS NO MONOLITH, THAT WAS MY PLINTH

WHO WAS THAT MONOLITH I SAW YOU WITH?
By Michael Goodwin
Heritage, 1976, 112 pages, $2.50
(plus $.50 postage & handling)
P.O. Box 721, Forest Park, GA 30050

Reviewed By REG

It's a STAR TREK cartoon book. It takes the starship Enterprise through every conceivable pun (good, bad, atrocious), one and two-liners, every sight gag possible, and some impossible. One gag or joke per page in three or four panels.

Michael Goodwin is not too good an artist, and he strained and reached for most of these cartoons.

What is really important is the announcement sent along with this corny cartoon klatch. Heritage is going to publish the late Thomas Burett Swann, Jr.'s fantasy novel, QUEENS WALK IN THE DUSK, in deluxe hardcover, illustrated by Jeff Jones: four full-color, and four black and white plates. It will be a numbered edition, limited to 2000 copies. $15.00 plus $1.00 for postage and handling.

●

I haven't been in an amateur press association in years, and while I've been busy with TAC and SFR, the apas have reproduced, spread, sent out tentacles...I didn't realize!

I've just received SOUTH OF THE MOON #13. It is a valuable index of all known and generally available fannish (SF and related interests) amateur press associations. It tells who, what, when, where, why and how much. There are lists of General Apas, local Apas, and Specialty Apas ...altogether over sixty groups of people exchanging their small-circulation publishings. Apas are friendly, intimate, close-knit groups. They cost very little money and can be absorbing to the point of destroying a marriage. If you want a copy of SOUTH OF THE MOON #13, write Andrew Sigel, 424 Greenleaf St., Evanston, IL 60202. It costs 50¢.

●

Under the familiar flag of "Everything You Want To Know About Robert E. Howard--But Were Too Ignorant To Ask" (my description---make no mistake, here) is THE ANNOTATED GUIDE TO ROBERT E. HOWARD'S SWORD & SORCERY--CONAN-KULL-KANE by Robert Weinberg. He is recognized as an extremely well-informed fan.

This is for the specialist, the enthusiast, the library. Published by Starmont House, Box E, West Linn, Or 97068. No price on the cover and I can't find Ted Dikty's phone to ask. Write and ask, I guess, if you're interested.

There is an introduction and chapters on Solomon Kane, King Kull, Bran Mak Morn and the Picts, James Allison, Turlough Dubh, Non-Series Stories, Conan, The Chronological Conan, and The Conan Saga (as written by Robert E. Howard).

●

U.S. Postal Service STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION. 1. Title of publication: SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. 2. Date of filing: Sept. 20, 1976. 3. Frequency of issue: Quarterly. Four issues published annually. Annual subscription $4.00. 4. Location of known office of publication: 1525 NE Ainsworth, Portland, OR 97211. Location of the headquarters or general business offices of the publishers: 1525 NE Ainsworth, Portland, OR 97211. 6. Publisher: Richard E. Geis, 1525 NE Ainsworth, Portland, OR 97211. Editor: Richard E. Geis, as above. Managing editor: none. 7. Owner: Richard E. Geis, 1525 NE Ainsworth, Portland, OR 97211. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: none. 10. Extent and nature of circulation:

	Average No. Copies each issue during preceding 12 months.	Actual No. Copies of single issue published nearest to filing date.
A. Total No. Copies Printed	5336	5800
8. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales.	1150	1207
2. Mail Subscriptions	1280	1581
C. Total Paid Circulation	2432	2788
D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means samples, complimentary, and other free copies.	251	209
E. Total Distribution	2683	2997
F. Copies Not Distributed		
1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing.	2653	2803
2. Returns from news agents	6	none
G. Total	5336	5800

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Richard E. Geis

Cain Smith has an interesting article in the September 19th issue of NEW LIBERTARIAN WEEKLY. He is a science fiction reviewer and columnist for the magazine, which has a strong sf interest, since Samuel E. Konkin III, a long-time fan, is the editor. Before I forget, subscriptions are $15. per year, and the address is Box 1748, Long Beach, CA 90801.

Cain Smith's point in his article, "The Trouble With SF", is that too few of the sf writers of today---especially the sophisticated "literature" oriented writers---really believe in the people and the futures they are portraying; they use the sf furniture and they use the themes, but their real interest is in the literary form, the style they are using or displaying, the relevant (to today) cause they are pushing or exploiting, or the money they'll make.

I can see how a prolific writer, after having created and peopled a dozen or so futures, worlds, times... really would find it difficult to care for and believe in them to the point of commitment of real emotion.

This necessary commitment must cost in psychic energy, and must be (is!) tiring to a writer---a kind of future shock---and may be subtly avoided for that reason. Thus the career writer would of necessity deal in cardboard and stereotype---simply in self-defense. It's likely that some writers have more guts and energy than others and are able/willing to put all of their power and energy into each successive story.

This reluctance to commit the inner Self to characters and future by a writer may also explain the resort to tongue-in-cheek science fiction in which nothing serious happens, there is no real emotion, and the people and future depicted are transparently sham. A writer, drained by a previous novel, may turn to such a technique if he has to keep going---keep earning money---or has a deadline to meet.

●

I very much enjoyed Philip Jose Farmer's THE ADVENTURES OF THE PEERLESS PEER (Aspen Press, $5.50) a year ago, so when Aspen Press sent along a few of their recent publications, I picked out the ARSENE LEPINE-HERLOCK SOAMES AFFAIR to while away a stray hour.

This small book, in limited edition ($5.00 paperback, $12.50 hardcover) is by "S. Beach Chester", and there is an introduction by Phil Farmer. I am of the idle opinion that Chester is fictional, and that perhaps Phil is the actual author...it all has his predilection about it... except that the story, begun in absurdity and doing great violence to Holmes' character (even allowing for jest and burlesque, and satire and parody), rapidly sinks to abject buffoonery, becomes static, stagey and silly...and I refuse to believe Phil would allow himself to write such a piece of malformed, malconceived idiocy.

The two other Aspen books sent were MY ADVENTURES IN THE FLYING SCOTSMAN by Eden Phillpotts ($4.00), and THE METHODS OF UNCLE ABNER by Melville Davisson Post ($6.95). I have no opinion on either of them. They are purported to be 19th century detective stories.

A very brief scan of a page here and there leads me to suspect modern imitative-of-19th-century-prose authorship of these two, too. I don't care enough to investigate further. Aspen Press' address is: P.O. Box 4119, Boulder, CO 80302.

●

Richard Gardner sent along a copy of his ALTERNATIVE AMERICA. It is a resource index, listing over 5,000 alternative lifestyle groups and organizations. It goes from Aardvarks and Abortion to Yippie, Yoga, Youth, Yurt, and Zen. There are three listings under Science Fiction: Star Trek Association, ALGOL, and TABEBUIAN. Frankly, I would think that the Science iction Writers of America, and LOCUS, would be better sf resources, overall. But I suppose any sf reference in this book is remarkable. $4. from Resources, Box 134, Harvard Square, Cambridge, MA 02138.

●

There is a new, high-quality (on a par with WHISPERS) fantasy/macabre offset zine just out. PHANTASY DIGEST is in the 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 format, looks professionally typeset, has good art, and a firm editorial hand by Wayne Warfield. The fiction is of professional quality. It is scheduled for irregular publication from Hall Publications, Box 326, Aberdeen, MD 21001. $4. per copy. It has 84 pages.

●

Continuing in this sub-genre is TOADSTOOL WINE, a collection of fantasy and horror from six independent magazines:FANTASY AND TERROR, MOONBROTH, SPACE AND TIME, WEIRDBOOK, WHISPERS, and WYRD. A good sampler of fiction, poetry, articles, and art. You might find something you like and want to read more of. Coordinating editor is W. Paul Ganley. Send $2.95 for a copy to Box 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226. (Make checks payable to WEIRDBOOK.)

●

Several years ago Tom Collins published an irregular, high-quality labor of love titled IS. The long-delayed seventh issue has now been printed ---but the magazine is now titled APOLLO. 8-1/2 x 11, offset, good paper, heavy covers...superior interior artwork and graphics. Material by: Alexei & Cory Panshin on Heinlein, a poem by Tom Disch, a long-lost sf story by Jack London, a sonnet sequence on Wells' THE WAR OF THE WORLDS by Wade Wellman... Why, there are even a series of reviews by myself, which I had forgotten about. Incredible.

APOLLO is a good value at 114 pages. Send $2.50 to Tom Collins, 338 W. 19 St., #1B, New York, NY 10011.

Tom Collins also sent along a collectors item: a long-lost poem by H. P. Lovecraft, MEDUSA: A Portrait, in the ragged-edged cover, high-quality paper, special typeface, limited (500) edition format. Tom says it is a real bargain for a first edition at $6.

Probably worth it for the collector or investor.

●

Gerry de la Ree sent along a copy of FANTASTIC NUDES: Second Series By Stephen E. Fabian. This is a beautifully printed b/w portfolio on 10-1/2 x 14 heavy white stock, unbound, in a heavy green cover. A limited edition of 750 copies. $8. per portfolio. The plates are of beautiful women from books such as SHE, THE GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM, UNDER THE MOONS OF MARS, GODS OF THE NORTH, THE BLACK FLAME, A WITCH SHALL BE BORN, PIRATES OF VENUS, THE SLAVE BRAND OF SLEMAN BIN ALI, THE HOUR OF THE DRAGON, and THE HUNTERS OF GOR. A feast for male sexists.

Send the checks to Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood Lane, Saddle River, NJ 07458.

I'm going to try to run one of these on the cover of SFR 20.

●

NOT A SMALL PRESS BOOK, but worth the space and the mention, is THE BOOK OF VIRGIL FINLAY, edited by Gerry de la Ree, and published by Avon under their specialized Flare imprint (30585, $4.95). 8-1/2 x 11 size, gloss cover, best paper, etc, and over 120 of the finest Finlay drawings and sketches. It covers his whole range and professional life. The introduction, "Finlay Remembered" by Gerry de la Ree, is intensely interesting. Another 'must have' book for serious students of sf, especially the pulp days.

●

The first issue of GALILEO is out. Good format: heavy four-color covers, 80 pages inside, newsprint, 8-1/2 x 11. $1.50 cover price, $4. for four issues by subscription from: Galileo, 339 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02115.

Seven stories, three articles, departments.... A professional package. Give it a try. A lot of the fiction strikes me as Literary and Pretentious, but the Chilson piece is good.

●

LET THE SUN SHINE IN

HEALTH AND LIGHT
By John N. Ott
Pocket Books, 80537, $1.95

Reviewed by Elsie

John Ott has been recognized through awards for his works' importance to eye care. There is still much to be learned on how the full spectrum of daylight affects plants, animals and humans, but enough research has been done to be of great importance to manufacturers and professionals who influence where and how we live and work.

John Ott, 45 years ago, began experimenting with "time lapse" photography. His hobby led to photo-biology. While experimenting with cell photography as certain drugs were introduced into their environment, Ott noted that changing the color filters often had a greater effect on the cells than the drugs.

Further studies on animals and man show that the full spectrum of daylight is important to stimulate man's endocrine system and that he suffers side effects when spending too much time under artificial light.

We generally think of color as something seen, but colors make up only a part of the spectrum; there are ultraviolet wavelengths, the opposite, infrared, and radiant energy.

In researches with fish, animals and poultry using 3 different types of fluorescent tubes (cool white, daylight white and pink), light duration, intensity and nearness to windows influenced egg laying, sex of young and behavior. Light which is received through the eye stimulates pituitary and pineal glands.

John Ott suffered from arthritis; one day he broke his glasses, and so for weeks went without dark or untinted glasses on the beach, in the sun. He noticed he did not need his cane and that his elbow and hip did not bother him as much.

Ott's "daylight treatment" improved others' hay fever, diabetes, metabolic function of cells, and cancer.

At the University of Oregon Medical School, a paper by Dr. Fredric Urbach summarized:

> "...One-third of all basal cell carcinomas occurred on areas receiving less than 20% of the maximum possible ultraviolet dose. This suggests that some factor in addition to ultraviolet radiation plays a significant role in the genesis of basal cell carcinoma."

Teachers, policemen and parents should read Chapter 12 of Ott's book on hyperactivity, aggression and behavior-modification.

Physicians studied thirty children for symptoms such as fatigue, lethargy, sleeplessness, throwing up, nervousness, headaches, etc., and discovered this group were all watching TV about 25-50 hours per week. When the TV was cut to zero, the childrens' symptoms cleared up in 2 or 3 weeks.

An experiment among hyperactive first-grade children by the Environmental Health & Light Research Institute showed that after a week of using full-spectrum light bulbs, there was a marked improvement in the childrens' attention span, nervousness, fatigue, irritability and hyperactivity.

To summarize, a quote from John Ott:

> "We have finally learned that light is a nutrient much like food, and, like food, the wrong kind can make us ill and the right kind can keep us well. Research has taken a giant step, but there is still much to be accomplished."

****

FAULTY STRUCTURE

BRIDGE OF ASHES
By Roger Zelazny
Signet 451-Y7080, $1.25

Reviewed By REG

In spite of the pivotal character's father's name (Richard Guise), I was disappointed in this latest Zelazny Signet novel. I sensed Roger was fulfilling a contract and had no real zest or burning-in-the-guts when writing this.

It's highly readable, intriguing in its way, as the story of a super telepath is developed, as the background of ages-long alien manipulation of mankind is revealed, and we learn of the dark man who has battled the aliens through the eons, seeking to free humanity.

But Dennis Guise is too much the pawn in the game, too little self-directed. The reader is too much the observer, not enough the participant who "becomes" the hero. Most of the time Dennis is in a since-birth catatonic-like trauma from telepathic overload.

The battling with the aliens is short-shrifted, too, and the ending, the winning, is flat and so-what. Better if the dark man had been the prime viewpoint character, instead of off-stage, doing his own counter-manipulation.

****

SUICIDE IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF SELF-CRITICISM

---Carl Juarez

****

JUST BECAUSE I'M PARANOID IT DOESN'T MEAN THEY'RE NOT OUT TO GET ME!!

---Carl Juarez

****

STARSCHLOCKED

THE STARCROSSED
By Ben Bova
Chilton, 1975, $6.95

Reviewed by REG

The intriguing problem for the reader of THE STARCROSSED is to try to divine how much of this story of a betrayed, undermined, misguided sf television series is masked truth, how much slightly distorted for effect, how much is plot-romance, and how much is highly relished, malign satire.

Ben Bova was the science advisor for the one-season disaster of a sf series, STARLOST. Harlan Ellison was the originator of the idea, did work like a trojan to get it off the ground, did write the opening scripts (which were butchered, beyond his control) and the abortion was produced in Canada.

Harlan has detailed this hellish experience in his oft-reprinted article, "Somehow, I Don't Think We're in Kansas, Toto."

But is/was Harlan really the irrepressible, aggressive, talented, woman-chasing, hard-driving man Ben Bova describes in the character named Ron Gabriel? Was there so much incredible backbiting, scheming, lying, cheating, etc. etc. etc. as revealed in this novel? Were Canadian highschool students recruited to produce the script ideas for STARLOST? (To save money.) Were the Canadian artists and craftsmen so dismally dumb! and stubborn? Were the actors so untalented and miscast? Was the producer such a misbegotten cretin? Was the director really an acid-freak on the skids? We may never know. It's marvelous fun to guess, though.

****

YOU CAN FOOL SOME OF THE PEOPLE ALL OF THE TIME, ALL OF THE PEOPLE SOME OF THE TIME, AND THAT'S USUALLY SUFFICIENT TO GET YOU ELECTED.

---Carl Juarez

****

9-13-76 Called the hospital this morning to check on Dad's condition. A nurse said he is now 'confused' most of the time and 'very active' with his legs and right arm. Apparently the paralysis is only total in his left arm. He has no bladder or bowel control. They have stopped the i.v. and are hand-feeding him.

When I went up to see him last Friday he wasn't conscious. I felt uncomfortable trying to awaken him or attract his attention since he is now in a small four-bed ward; the other heart patients were watching. One of the damned monitors went off with a BEEP-BEEP-BEEPing when I touched his arm.

I don't want to go see him again, yet will, of course. The place is demeaning, humiliating, depressing. There he lies like a corpse with this machine blinking and clicking to itself as its tentacles embrace him.

****

Still digging out rocks and small boulders in my new garden. How the contractors must have cursed when they built this house and had to dig down into this ancient riverbed to put in the full basement. I'm digging out the rocks to a depth of one foot. I'll have a prime 6' x 12' garden when I'm finished, ready for planting in the spring. I'll fertilize it this winter with regular burials of garbage and leaves from the surrounding trees, tra-la.

My Gro-Lite crops in the basement are beginning to disappoint me; the lettuce comes up and spreads beginning leaves, but the stems are too weak and the plant falls over. The onions are sprawled all over as if they don't know which way is up, and the carrots appear equally as confused. I suspect this was a mistake. A cold frame in the backyard and a few pots in the window to start some seeds may be the best bet for early crops. All-year basement salad crops may be impractical. But I'll keep up the experiment for at least a full two or three months.

3:25 PM Just got a call from a Dr. Elliott at the Veteran's hospital. Dad is deteriorating and the message is that he may not last too much longer; he's largely unresponsive and rarely conscious. He may have had further small strokes; he refuses food.

●

9-16-76 Saw Dad Tuesday and he seemed the same as the first time I saw him a week ago. But they have moved him to another room, this without the tell-tales and heart monitor. Simply a two-bed ward with a color TV on the wall. Dad is uninterested in or unaware of the TV. He comes to awareness sometimes and understands when I speak to him. Nods in answer to questions. But the unspoken message I get from nurses and the doctors is that he is now in a dying room. They are simply waiting. He either refuses to swallow food (hand-fed) or is unable to swallow because of motor control problems because of the stroke. He is back on the i.v.

****

The stock market amazes me. Today a report in the WALL STREET JOURNAL that new manufacturing orders turned down in July, and that in the latest reporting week new claims for unemployment insurance went up (which presages, almost certainly, at least 8% unemployment rate for September which will be reported to the nation around October 6-8th...thereby sinking Gerald Ford's election hopes.) Yet today the Dow-Jones Industrial average went up 8 points. This, too, in the face of the Ford Motor strike. If the market goes up tomorrow I'll be flabbergasted.

I note that the British government has upped its prime interest rate to 13%! They hope to lure money from other countries to give their economy a shot of wealth. I'd love to lend them money at 13%, but I do not understand who is going to borrow it at 15-16%? Those are prohibitive interest rates which are usually designed to inhibit borrowing and cool off an economy. I doubt this move by the English authorities will work.

Loan demand in this country continues amazingly sluggish. Ths prime rate may be lowered to 6.75%. Steel production and ordering is surprisingly slow and low.

The next month will tell the tale. If the new cars, starting Oct. first, sell well, there is hope. If they bomb...

Energy costs are continuing to mount. Utility companies are getting massive rate increases. And local and state taxes continue to creep up and up and up...

****

Interesting item in the news today; A large percentage of waste radioactive containers, dumped in the Atlantic in the early 50s have broken open and have "contaminated" the surrounding areas of ocean floor. There are giant bell-shaped sponges growing on the drums. Are these monster-sized sponges mutations or only a heretofore unknown variety?

******

I finished digging and de-rocking the new garden in the back yard. Now to find a place to put all those damned rocks.

Have plans also for a 'container' garden: foot-wide planks joined in a rectangle or square, filled with dirt. Beats digging out a ton of rocks. I will build two: 18" wide and 6' long. I have just enough lumber. This above-ground garden will be for tomatoes and cucumbers exclusively. First I have to give the planks a coat of linseed oil, then paint them a week later. They should last quite a few years that way. One horrified buy of a head of lettuce for 50¢ this morning (and a look at the per-pound price for other vegetables) convinced me beyond doubt.

We're going to have several bushels of potatoes to dig up soon. They're so crowded the upper level is being pushed above the surface of the earth.

The dwarf peach tree has tripled in size this summer; I expect a great crop next year. (But I begin to wonder if it is really a dwarf tree!)

●

9-17-76 Dad's condition is 'unchanged'. I cannot help but think that his strength is gradually waning without solid food, even if the i.v. does contain vitamins and nutrients. (And I have not asked what it does contain---perhaps only glucose.)

****

A call from Jeff Levin of Garvin & Levin, Booksellers yesterday. He had been at the worldcon and offered to bring my Hugo back to Portland.

We drove over and picked it up.

It is a very impressive Award this year---heavy, round, stone-like plastic base with a Tim Kirk sculpted dragon curled around the back. The Award plate is a handsome black with silvery lettering.

This is my third Fan Writer Hugo, and I must admit a feeling of amazement and pride. And gratitude. Wow! Thanks.

"Screw that humble act, Geis. Lemme have it--it's mine! I won that Hugo and here you sit with a crocodile shit-eating grin taking the credit."

Alter----this is not the time or the place...

"Hell it isn't! You'd still be cranking the Gestetner, cursing stencils and praying for enough subscriptions to pay for the ink if it weren't for me. You'd be scrounging for the material and begging for art. I am the creature to whom you owe all this. Do I ever get any thanks? NEVER! All I get is my picture in SFR and GALAXY...and a poor likeness it is, let me tell the world. Tim Kirk is a fine artist, but he's never even seen me! All he had was a divine inspiration, and he made me too ugly! I'm handsome! I'm---"

Drunk. Go to bed, Alter. Sleep it off.

"Like hell I'm drunk. A little home brew wine doesn't make me drunk. I'm sick and tired of you putting me down, maligning me, every time I make a valid point, a correct claim, a right opinion. The day will come,

Geis, mark my words, the day will come when I, Alter-Ego, when I will be Fully Recognized, when my True Worth will be known, and when that day comes, Geis, when that marvelous moment arrives, then you'll be FINISHED, WIPED OUT, DEMOLISHED!"

Your true worth, Alter, is about five cents. I'll even give four cents change. Look at you! A mess. Why do your tendrils turn green when you've had too much alcohol?

"How should I know? Just lucky, I guess. Now, I'll just take my Hugo ---"

Unhand that trophy, you scurvy little alien!

"No! It's mine!"

Give it back!

"I earned it. You can't---Damn—LET GO!"

Alter! Stop---Don't---

Crickle-crack--snap!

"Oooo..."

My Ghod! Look what you've done!

"Geez, I'm sor--- NO! I'm not sorry. I deserve at least half this Hugo...and now I've got half!"

GET OUT OF HERE! OUT! OUT!

●

9-20-76 We went up to see Dad today. My Uncle Mun drove us up. Dad is the same... The doctor took me aside and said they had canvassed the area for a nursing home to take Dad, but he requires too much technical care: must have oxygen and skilled hand-feeding, and perhaps i.v.s, too. They took him off the i.v. when we were there, as an experiment, since he has been managing to swallow soft foods fairly well, but there is always the danger of his inhaling some of it into his lungs, which would cause pneumonia and take him within hours... The doctor also told me he believed Dad would not leave the hospital. He again asked about the limits of the measures he should take to keep Dad alive...which suggests there is an oncoming deterioration. I again told him that Dad and I had discussed this possible situation, and, like my mother, Dad did not want heroic or exceptional measures taken to keep his body breathing. That is my view for myself, too: If my mind is gone, forget it.

9-24-76 Yes, O, yes, I watched half of the dull debate between the sing-song President and the Kewpie-Doll. I marveled as each told of what they were going to do if... And I wondered, hownthehell can they stop inflation, cut taxes, do this, do that, since they will be the nation's chief executive, not the nation's dictator who can rule by edict. Congress makes the laws.

These fellows greatly exaggerate their power and importance. It's all a farce and a shadow show. They each must have a bad case of trench mouth from putting their footies in. Both of these men are members/stooges of the Eastern Establishment; Carter no less than Ford. They are managers, second-level administrators who have the prestige of office, but little actual power where it counts. There are groups and individuals who "suggest" to the sitting President who his key cabinet officers will be, and, somehow, every time these key men turn out to be men with close ties to the Rockefellers or other (less visible) money/power loci.

Ever really listen to Carter? His speech rhythms are halting, and his sentences almost always end on a lower note.

Ford, in the "debate", was much more firm and strong-voiced; more forceful and rhythmic.

But, of course the state of the economy will probably decide the election.

****

Dad was only barely conscious when I saw him today. They have taken him off the i.v. and his oxygen. To see if he can survive without them. If he makes it he'll be sent home (here) or to a nursing home, to die eventually. And...if he deteriorates or has another heart attack while off the i.v. and oxygen...what? Mun and I both think it would be a blessing if he dies soon.

Both my mother and my father (and all my grandparents) will have died from strokes/heart attacks.

I guess you know what I've got to look forward to.

I'm in a lousy mood. Alter, what should I do?

"Go fuck a duck, Geis."

I would, but Donald runs from me on sight, and Daisy won't let me in her house any more.

●

9-29-76 Saw Dad today. I cringed. They had moved him to another room; I have no knowledge why. Maybe his dying was a bad vibes situation for the other man in the room.

He was simply lying there, his hand tied to the bed railing, panting with such terrible effort...Shit. He was only partially conscious, I think. He cannot swallow well enough now to eat. They could feed him only six teaspoons full of food earlier in the day. He is down to 101 pounds...losing about three pounds a week...burning up his vital tissues until...There was a kind of rattle in his breathing, too.

I don't think he'll last more than a few more days. I called Mun and we'll go up tomorrow for a last visit.

I feel depressed and scared. My stomach hurts.

●

9-30-76 You're all probably sick unto death of my economic commentary and doom-saying. The plunge of the English pound this past week and the drop in our government's leading indicator's index, plus the 15% drop in building contracts in August presages a further slide in the U.S. economy. I could go on but let it pass. I've made my points for this issue. The handwriting is on the wall (and nobody wants to look at it).

****

I'm interested in a story in this morning's paper: The city is citing a man who has been keeping five hens in a coop (well built, shielded from neighbors' eyes, sanitary, no smell) for a year-and-a-half. He and his wife kept the chickens to provide a living experience for their young children, to provide eggs and to make a modified 'closed ecology system' (the chickens eat the garbage). They are being cited because they didn't (or couldn't) get permission from their neighbors. The city health department is satisfied with the cleanliness of their operation.

Now, I'm fairly sure I could get permission from my neighbors, but I will want to check into costs of feed, hens, diseases, and other such items.

I suspect that as a result of this story a lot of people will think about keeping chickens in the city, given eggs at 75¢ per dozen now, and climbing. Next year they could easily be $1.00 per dozen.

We eat a lot of eggs.

****

By the way, I do need a few new bookstore outlets every issue to replace those who drop off (or are dropped for lack of payment), so if any of you readers know of a local bookstore with a fairly large sf section and which you think might be interested in selling SFR, I'd be much obliged if you'd drop me a postcard with the name and address.

●

10-1-76 We saw Dad yesterday, Mun and I, and were told by one of the doctors who have his case that Dad didn't have very long. His ability to swallow has deteriorated. They have him on the i.v. again, but it is a saline solution, to keep him from dehydration. Beyond that---nothing. Dad refuses the oxygen tube, we were told.

This morning I went to the Little Chapel of the Chimes to make preliminary arrangements for the funeral. Later, at home, the doctor called and told me Dad was much poorer today. Again, no hope...just a matter of time.

I went up on the bus and took care of the Veteran Administration's paperwork requirements. They will send dad to the Chapel after he has died. There is a $250. death benefit and he will be buried in Willamette

National Cemetery, free of charge. There is a $255. Social Security death benefit, too.

I saw dad for what will probably be the last time today, also. They had him in the sitting-up position, to make breathing easier. He knew me. It tore me up, but I told him what the score was (as if he didn't know!) and told him I love him, and would probably see him in twenty-five or thirty years. And I said goodbye, and walked out of that room.

This is hitting me hard. Much harder than I thought it would. Dad and I had barely seen each other for a dozen or so years, and rarely before that, after he and mom divorced when I was six years old. Only in the past year, since mom died, have I seen and talked with him regularly. He was a virtual stranger in so many ways....

Lady Companion and I are going to see LOGAN'S RUN and ROLLERBALL tonight. I hope they will distract me for a few hours. They are a double feature at the MT. TABOR theater: 99¢ admission. All films come cheap to he who waits.

●

10-3-76 Dad may not last the night. He insists they not give him the i.v. He wants to get it over with, obviously. I don't blame him.

LOGAN'S RUN is a mild, idiot Hollywood Sci-Fi movie, the kind producers feel comfortable with---implausible, inconsistent, cliche-ridden (does a dog have fleas?) and not really worth seeing. If you paid three bucks or more to see it I suggest you sue somebody. For the movie-goer the world is strictly caveat emptor.

The movie doesn't hang together, so it must hang separately. It has little relation to the novel. That's a high price to pay for a title.

I was most insulted by Peter Ustinof's American accent, which he does so badly (but it's a wonder he can do it at all), by the gutting of the Sanctuary theme, and most of all by the hoary , insulting use of the computer overload/self-destruct device to solve/end the picture and free mankind from its thrall. Bah!

It's incredible how, in order to protect their investment, these moronic, out-of-touch, overage producers butcher a story by arbitrarily inserting their own ideas of what 'the kids' want in a 'Sci-Fi' flick.

Don't pay to see this turkey; it'll be on TV in a few years with the brief semi-nude scenes deleted. No loss.

We didn't stay to see ROLLERBALL. I can no longer endure (very often) sitting in a theater for four hours on end. ROLLERBALL will be on TV, too, soon, I imagine. Hell, I'm enjoying watching EARTHQUAKE in two parts last week and this.

●

10-4-76 We went up to the hospital this afternoon and visited dad. He was conscious, knew us, and seemed to appreciate the flowers and our talk. He had, we were told, managed to swallow a few teaspoonsful of food earlier, but had still insisted he didn't want the i.v. (which was now a glucose solution). The nurses were very considerate and sympathetic.

I again said goodbye, and said I'd be up to see him on Wednesday, but I wonder if he'll last.

****

I saw the latest episode of SPACE: 1999 after the football game. There has been no basic improvement. The idiocy plots continue. The basic premise is that when you have two strange, unknown aliens in the base, you always leave them alone, unmonitored, in the base hospital. After that, of course, basic policy is to let these unknown quantities roam the base at will, unescorted. And of course you must believe, in the beginning, everything they say. It is also mandatory that security personnel be always and easily fooled and overpowered/knocked-out/killed.

Unless these "rules" are followed, understand, the lobotomized writers for this series could not find a way to create danger and suspense.

I especially sneered at the silly "meteor storm" encountered by one of the base's craft in interstellar space.

●

10-5-76 The call came at 7:20 this morning. He's dead. Ritual sympathy words from the doctor. No autopsy. They may take his corneas for the eye bank.

I've made the phone calls and visited the Little Chapel of the Chimes, picked out the casket ($450.), given the information for the graveside services, and signed all the papers. Total cost of the funeral is $1235.

The message for today is: DON'T DIE: it costs too much.

****

I'm far behind in typing, reading and layouts for this issue, and don't give a shit. Not today. I may get drunk tonight. My latest gallon of homemade wine is ready. This gallon was given an extra shot of yeast ten days after the initial mixture of yeast, grape juice and sugar. We just tasted it, and it came out less sweet and more potent. I'll probably continue making wine to this formula, with slight variations and experiments in sugar and yeasting.

●

10-9-76 We buried dad yesterday in the Willamette National Cemetery on Mt. Scott in southeast Portland. Beautiful view of the city, especially of the tall new buildings of the city center.

There were eight people present, all relatives or relatives of relatives. Plus the representative of the U. S. government who played a scratchy recond of taps (God know how many times it has been played at funerals, at the rate of about five times per day...) and who presented to me the carefully folded flag that had been draped on the copper-colored casket through the short service.

It was a beautiful day.

****

It was a lovely day today after the fog burned off. I dug up the potatoes (about ten pounds ...not bad for a "volunteer" crop that required only occasional watering). We're still picking strawberries. I could have (and should have) planted a second crop of carrots. The cucumbers are still growing and bearing.

****

The Gro-Lites in the basement are definitely not working out. I'll dismantle that experiment soon, to make room for more boxes of back issues of THE ALIEN CRITIC (as they are reprinted).

****

This is the day I'll do my commentary (minor) on the recent HUGO Awards. But first some thoughts on SFR.

I like this extended diary/commentary and will definitely continue it. I hope you readers get as much out of it as I do. Although some of the entries this time were not fun to write. What you're getting is a non-sexual version of my personalzine of a few years ago.

The future of SFR is bright in spite of the state of the nation's economy. I have every hope and expectation to continue SFR for at least another ten years. There might be a break or two sometime---an illness might strike, or an accident occur, or I might need to skip an issue to write a particularly important novel, but SFR will prevail, yea, even unto my retirement. Also, damn it, will Alter-Ego!! I may find circulation shrinking due to Hard Times, and may be required to go back to the cursed Gestetner, but SFR will continue.

How can I be so sure of this? Well, dad left me $16,000. I'm going to put this into either a certificate of deposit and take a monthly income check of about $95., or go into short term treasury bills. Which way depends on the level of interest rates come February when the $12,000. c.d. in a bank comes due.

I tend to favor the treasury bills, since the Democrats will certainly hype the economy early next year with another twenty billions of debt or so, and perhaps pass some laws to encourage borrowing by industry. But interest rates were expected to go up long before now, according to learned economists. I'll wait and see.

The point is, the interest earned by this money will further insure my living expenses, will cut the amount I have to earn from SFR, and will make it easier to continue this absurd life of pontificating, publishing and intellectual poltroonery. Yessir.

It will be made easier by the Democrats' penchant for giving low-income

people tax breaks and subsidies (as a buffer against the hidden taxes of inflation which the Democrats also create with their endless deficits) which tends to give most people a sneaking suspicion that by God there is such a thing as a free lunch. There ain't; the bill is carefully hidden.

I've always been security conscious, and insecure in financial areas. This paid-for home and the small monthly income is my cup of tea. But I don't lust for riches. I've made my bargain with the gods: I won't try for wealth and fame and power if they'll agree to let me have a long life, a small income, and The Observer/Critic role in life. So far we've all lived up to the deal.

SFR is up to 56 pages this issue, you may have noticed. This bonus is due to my accidentally learning that the combination of one 40 page signiture and one 16 page increment is actually only a few bucks more in printing cost than the usual 48 page format, in newsprint. The intricacies of printing costs & large offset presses are baffling. The one lesson I have learned is to Always Ask Questions.

Of course the extra pages will mean an extra twenty bucks or so on the postal bill, but whatthehell.

The Philip K. Dick interview in this issue was a happy event. Dan DePrez, a local fan, asked a month or so ago if I'd be interested in an interview with Dick if he could get one during a trip into the wilds of Southern California.

I said sure, and forgot about it.

Then a few weeks ago came the call from Dan that he had it and would deliver it the next day. And he did. And it turned out to be an excellent interview, extremely valuable in knowing Phil Dick, his working methods, his changing views, his personality, his reality...and non-reality. I couldn't refuse it. I feel it should be published as soon as possible---this issue.

******

SET FOR NEXT ISSUE is an interview with Nebula and Hugo winner Joe Haldeman, by Darrell Schweitzer. And scheduled for the same issue is an interview with Tim Kirk by Jon Gustafson.

SET FOR #21 (May) is a long, rich interview with Leigh Brackett and Edmond Hamilton.

******

Now, at last, let me do my thing on the Hugos.

The 34th World Science Fiction Convention, held at Kansas City, Sept. 2-6, 1976, had an attendance of 2,614.

Phoenix won the right to host the 1978 Worldcon.

The Hugo winners and 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th place finishers were as follows (Courtesy of and credit to LOCUS, The Newspaper of the Science Fiction Field: Box 3938, San Francisco, CA 94119; North America subs--15/$6.):

Best Novel: THE FOREVER WAR by Joe Haldeman.
2. DOORWAYS IN THE SAND by Roger Zelazny.
3. INFERNO By LarryNiven & Jerry Pournelle.
4. THE COMPUTER CONNECTION by Alfred Bester.
5. THE STOCHASTIC MAN by Robert Silverberg.

Comment: THE FOREVER WAR is clearly the best of this group. It is possible for a relatively unknown writer (admittedly already in 'the family') to beat out the heavy reputations and flawed novels of the other nominees.

Best Novella: "Home Is The Hangman" by Roger Zelazny.
2. "The Storms of Windhaven" by George R.R. Martin and Lisa Tuttle.
3. "Arm" by Larry Niven.
4. "The Silent Eyes of Time" by Algys Budrys.
5. "The Custodians" by Richard Cowper.

Comment: I have not read "The Custodians". I was not impressed with any of these nominees except Budrys' "The Silent Eyes of Time" which I think exceptional for his skill and maturity.

Best Novelette: "The Borderland of Sol" by Larry Niven.
2. "The New Atlantis" by Ursula K. LeGuin.
3. "And Seven Times Never Kill Man" by George R. R. Martin.
4. "San Diego Lightfoot Sue" by Tom Reamy.
5. "Tinker" by Jerry Pournelle

Comment: The Niven story is the best of the lot, though Tom Reamy's "Lightfoot Sue" is undervalued and of Hugo quality.

Best Short Story: "Catch That Zeppelin" by Fritz Leiber.
2. "Croatoan" by Harlan Ellison.
3. "Child of All Ages" by P.J. Plauger.
4. "Sail the Tide of Mourning" by Richard Lupoff.
5. "Rogue Tomato" by Michael Bishop.
6. "Doing Lennon" by Gregory Benford.

Comment: No comment. I've only read "Croatoan."

Best Professional Editor: Ben Bova.
2. Robert Silverberg.
3. Ed Ferman.
4. Jim Baen.
5. Ted White.

Comment: This is an impossible judgement, since none of the other editors have the money and circulation to match Bova's ANALOG. I would include Terry Carr and Don Wollheim in the nomination group, by the way.

Best Professional Artist: Kelly Freas.
2. Rich Sternbach.
3. George Barr.
4. Steve Fabian.
5. Vincent DiFate.

Comment: Freas seems to roll on like the Mississippi, winning the Best Pro Artist Hugo every year. He has the constant exposure and the style and techniques the voters like, time after time. I expect Fabian to edge up in the balloting and take the Hugo one of these years.

Best Dramatic Presentation: A BOY AND HIS DOG by Harlan Ellison.
2. MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL.
3. DARK STAR.
4. ROLLERBALL.
5. THE CAPTURE.

Comment: I've only seen DARK STAR. Curious that such an amateurish but funny movie came in third.

Best Fanzine: LOCUS
2. SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW
3. OUTWORLDS
4. ALGOL
5. DON-O-SAUR

Comment: With the exception of the ENERGUMEN win and the SFR/ALGOL tie in 1973, the Best Fanzine Hugo has been alternating between LOCUS and SFR for about nine years. I imagine it will continue this way until one of us quits or some exceptionally talented (and work crazy) new editor comes up from the ranks. ALGOL finished fourth; interesting decline, given the magazine's massive increase in circulation and quality layouts and printing. The heavy percentage of ads in ALGOL and the "professional" packaging must disqualify it as a fanzine in many voters' minds.

Best Fan Artist: Tim Kirk.
2. Phil Foglio.
3. Grant Canfield.
4. Bill Rotsler.
5. Jim Shull.

Comment: Tim doesn't do much work in the fanzines anymore, but clearly the memory lingers on. Phil Foglio? I'm not familiar with his work; his rd place is surprising and perhaps the result of a small block of dedicated votes by a special interest group. Grant Canfield deserves a Hugo any year now.

Best Fan Writer: Richard E. Geis.
2. Susan Wood.
3. Don C. Thompson.
4. Charles Brown.
5. Don D'Amassa.

Comment: This is my second Best Fan Writer Hugo in a row, and my third in this category. The first came in 1970. Harry Warner, Susan Wood and I have dominated this category for seven or eight years.

LOCUS reports that 1,595 Hugo Ballots were counted, and over 50 votes were not counted because of some failure by the voter to follow the rules.

OTHER AWARDS were: The John Campbell Award, presented by Conde Nast for Best New Writer.
Won by Tom Reamy.
2. John Varley.
3. Arsen Darnay.
4. Joan Vinge.
5. M. A. Foster.

The Gandalf Award, presented by Lin Carter and SAGA for Life's Work in Fantasy.

Given to L. Sprague deCamp.
2. Andre Norton.
3. Poul Anderson.
4. C.S. Lewis.
5. Ursula K. LeGuin.

ALSO GIVEN: a Special Committee Award to James Gunn for ALTERNATE WORLDS, the E.E. Evans (Big Heart Award) to Ron Graham, and the First Fandom Award to Harry Bates.

****

SF NEWSLETTER FROM ITALY

By Gianni Montanari

Piacenza 28/09/76

'Dear Dick,

Sometimes I fear I won't be able to rise from my bed tomorrow and earn with the typewriter what my family needs; a few days ago we had in Friuli the last shocks of the series (4 big earthquakes up to now) with the last victims; in the same days our Parliamentary Board in charge of the investigations on the Lockeed affair repeated the assurance that the matter would be cleared soon, while our old Pope blamed again the indiscipline of another old guy, the French bishop Lefebvre. Well, we Italian are lucky: we have always a strong stomach...

'This summer we had just one thing to rejoice by (but always with some hints of an approaching catastrophe); the rather satisfying situation of the SF field. As a late American colony since 1952 (when the first Italian SF magazine, Scienza Fantastica, appeared in the news-stands) the 90% of our present production comes always from America or England but perhaps now things are changing; our lovely booth-shaped peninsula begins to sprout Italian writers - besides flowers and recently earthquakes.

'Today our SF Market consists of twenty different publications (magazines, collections of stories, novels, reprints, both in paperback and hardcover) coming from ten publishers working almost exclusively in this field and you can trust me when I say that now we are very crowded! Many of these publications were started for solid mercantile reasons about six or twelve months ago, in a moment in which SF appeared to be a remunerative work, when our television (state networks, both channels) and newspapers became strangely interested in SF, a stuff up to then neglected or scorned. In more recent times, however, our poor Lira went falling down right before our last general elections in June, when many of your politicians feared our Communist Party would obtain the full powers in the government; after that, the Lira caught a tremulous balance with some restrictions for the inner business and the payments abroad...and this began to weigh on the SF market, largely based on buyings from the States. Two days ago a friend confirmed the death of a newborn magazine (Fantascienza, two issues), after the previous disappearance of a larger collection (Andromeda, 18 volumes). Other people are not going very well too...but I don't like a charge of menagramo (one who brings bad luck) and I prefer to hold my tongue on the name of the next death.

'The same situation, more or less, is going on in France; from three collections in 1968, our Gallic cousins arrived at the beginning of 1976 to twenty-three but now one magazine has already disappeared, other three are fighting to survive and one publisher has been compelled to the fusion with a bigger one.

'Wow! And the Italian writers? In my six years as editor of two collections I tried to nurse our SF at my best, editing with two friends (now independent editors) three anthologies and giving room in GALASSIA to eight novels; in December also the SFBC - the collection de-luxe - shall present an Italian novel (perhaps the best one in the whole Italian SF history) by Lino Aldani. Such names as Aldani, Sandrelli, Miglieruolo, Prosperi, Catani, Curtoni (and mine... yeah, I'm a writer too) are largely unknown in the States or in England but in Old Europe are at last beginning their slow circulation; some of them have already been published in URSS and in other countries behind the Iron Curtain, and this is a very strange destiny...Born of American SF, the Italian one is better known in Eastern Europe.

But With a Little Help from My Friends...

PUBLISHER	COLLECTIONS	START
Armenia	ROBOT	1976
CELT	GALASSIA, SFBC	1959
Ciscato	FANTASCIENZA (1), NEBULA	1976
Edinational	PERRY RHODAN	1976
Fanucci	FUTURO, ORIZZONTI	1972
Longanesi	POCKET FS	1975
MEB	SAGA	1975
Moizzi	SIGMA	1975
Mondadori	URANIA	1952
Nord	COSMO ARGENTO, COSMO ORO, ANTICIPAZIONE, FANTACOLLANA	1970

'N.B. These are just the biggest!'

****

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT

Alter, stop that obscene stroking of your tendrils and attend to your work!

"Go away, Geis...give me a few more moments of privacy...oooohhh... just another few seconds...ahhhhh..."

Disgusting. Revolting. Look at you, all tendril-tense and quivering.

"I have to discharge the accumulated karma force, don't I? Otherwise I get cranky and irritable. Now I'm calm and cool, soothed...I am full of the milk of human kindness---such as it is."

Good. Glad you're in such a fine mood. Now is the time to do your book review column for #19, and---

"Oh, shit! You just ruined my good mood. All right, all right, let me get it over with. What have we read lately? Where is that moldering pile of books?"

Under that pile of...are those used synapses?

"Yes, if you must know. Never seen synapses before, Geis?"

No...Ugly things.

"You'd be ugly too if you had to use every bit of energy to jump an impossible gap, like these poor little critturs. If it wasn't for these little martyrs, Geis, your thinking would stop. Your brain would be empty of all thought. Hmmm. I guess the rumors I hear from the synapse corps is true---they're on strike against you. You keep the blood chemistry too full of alcohol and too low in proper nutrients. No proper food, no thinking. Can't say I blame them; you treat me the same way. Tyrant!"

Knock it off, Alter, Get your ass in gear and review.

"All right! The bile of human vindictiveness runs in my veins, now. Toss me a book."

How about AND STRANGE AT ECBATAN THE TREES by Michael Bishop. Harper and Row published it earlier this year and ask $7.95 for it.

"Huh. They might as well ask ten bucks a pop, since they probably won't sell a thousand anyway. Make that 500. There may be that many easily cowed sf enthusiasts and know-nothing libraries and idiots around who think a neato "literary" title and a high-priced thin volumn equate with quality."

Alter, please, must you savage a good writer this way?

"When did we read this thing? A month ago? I can't remember thing one about it!"

Read the poop on the dust jacket; maybe that'll refresh your failed memory.

"Yeah...'twelve thousand years into the future on the island of Ongladred, where mankind has survived two enigmatic, civilization-destroying setbacks. Now a third holocaust is anticipated...' Yeah, I begin to get a tickle in my memory. 'They fear destruction from invading barbarians.. the reappearance of a semi-mythical sea creature, and the devious intervention of the neo-human Parfects...'

Remember now, Alter?

"Yeah. The old genius who takes corpses and programs them to act out his morality plays in a special ampitheater. He is under suspicion by

the government. A spy is assigned to him and becomes converted. It was all very indirect and symbolic and a bit obscure...one of those 'make the reader work' novels. The writer self-consciously is intent on instructing the reader, but never, never bluntly; always with that delicious (for the writer) superior-than-thou understatement, metaphor and ambiguity. And, of course, the questions about the incredible sea creature and the holocaust are never positively answered, remaining at the end in the ominous future. I can do without this arty-farty science fiction, Geis. Hand me the next book."

I shudder to think what you'll say about this : SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg. Published by Bobbs-Merrill at $8.95, a recent 1976 publication.

"I liked it a whole bunch. It's seemingly a throwback to Bob's more 'commercial' period, since it has a hero with whom one can identify, danger, suspense, crisis, and a satisfactory, no-rip-off ending. It has plenty food for thought and a lot of future detail and wonder."

I don't believe what I'm hearing

"No, really, I'm enthusiastic about this one, Geis. The crafty, old tyrant, ruler of the world in the 21st Century, name of Genghis II Mao IV Khan, is terrified of death. He's had a dozen or so transplants of major and minor organs. And his doctor is a black American doctor. I loved the intricate palace intrigue, the world-wide TV and radio monitoring network that feeds into one vast console and hundreds of TV screens..."

You think Bob Silverberg is leaving SF with a bang?

"I hope he doesn't leave if he's back to writing sf of this quality. I wonder if this book is the last book he's written, or one one simply unpublished from his Middle Period? The tension is terrific when Shadrach discovers that his fine young body has been chosen by the Khan to be the host for the old dictator's brain in a final try at cheating death. The ultimate transplant."

Can you think of anything wrong with the novel?

"No, Geis, I can't. I think it's Bob's best book in maybe six or seven years. DYING INSIDE is the last really superior book he's written but DYING was more downbeat and low-key even though superb in its integrity and insights. SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE is a highly reader-satisfying, commercial novel. Commercial in the sense of being excellent and having great reader appeal. Wide appeal."

Yeah, well, I can tell from the readership vibes that they're faunching for you to rip a book and author to shreds. One favorable review per column is all they can take.

"In that case, Geis, you'd better review GATE OF IVREL by C.J. Cherryh (DAW UY1226, $1.25), because I loved it, too."

Alter! Don't do this to me! Rend and tear! Demolish! Draw blood Bring squeals of anguish from authors' lips.

"Next book. I just want to take a moment to compliment Cherryh for a really tough novel, enjoyable as hell, with the precious combination of grim reality and idealism that we both think makes for the best story-telling. This one is clearly superior sword and sorcery, the story of a Task and a gritty devotion to honor. The style is a delight, full of muscle and grace. Let's hope C.J. Cherryh writes novels for us to read for a long, long time."

I have to agree with you, Alter. A superior effort. Now---

"Now from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the smooth, controled prose of a natural story-teller to the klunky, square-wheeled malaprop prose of a beginning talentless writer who seems to lack any feel for words."

Now, that's more like it!

"I knew you'd smile if I said that."

But, Alter, I cringe in sympathy for the man you are about to eviscerate. I can remember back to the days of my youth, when I, too, was a beginning writer (albeit with some obvious talent) who hadn't developed or tamed or honed the sensitivity for words I now possess---Why do you snirkle, Alter?

"Me, snirkle? ME? Why, Geis, I was just having a coughing spell and trying to hide it. But I get your message. It's Be Kind to Dumb Authors Week, is that it?"

Be gentle.

"I'll be as neat and clean in my surgery as I can. He won't feel a thing until...well, until he tries to nod his head."

Sigh Well, let me give the intro first. You remember how I was pasting-up the layout pages for this issue the other...afternoon...Sunday, I think...when the phone rang and I answered it and it was an outraged author name of Thomas W. Barker who was at my throat for the review by Karen Rappaport of his Major Books novel, FIVE FOR INFINITY (#3050, #1.25).

"Case of mistaken SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW."

Right. His argument was with Martin Last of SFR Monthly, the New York all-review magazine. Ms. Rappaport's review was in #19 of that workmanlike publication, not my SFR. Anyway, that aspect was straightened out and I said I'd take a look at his novel and mayhap review it in this issue, given time and space.

"I've read her review, Geis. A woman after my own heart. Such lovely phrases as 'This book, purporting to be a novel...' 'nothing here but one-dimensional cardboard characters...' 'Not only is the book simplistic, it is dull. You might do better to buy that book with the blank pages between the covers.' Keen mind there."

Alter! Do you have any idea of the anguish Mr. Barker is going through? Be quick about it.

"Okay. Five scientists/technicians steal the first interstellar space ship (which they have been working on) from the launch pad. They had been going through a practice launch---and made it for real. They have noble ideals. The launch and theft generates some good suspense and excitement. But from then on these people do nothing but squabble about their precious instruments, the instrument readings, and what does the information mean?

"They are able to reach faster-than-light speeds with incredible alacrity, able to plunge into the heart of a black hole, read with equanimity of umpty-ump gravities on their dials (without so much as an extra pound resulting in ship gravity---no explanation: I think Mr. Barker simply forgot it might affect his people), and enter a kind of psychedelic time/space...

"Now, this might sound exciting, but it took in excess of 100 pages and these people spent the whole time fussing with those #$&*@ instruments!"

Alter, Barker did say he was... or had been...an engineer, and said his book had been reviewed favorably in a 100,000 circulation engineering trade journal.

"Yah. So I suppose all engineers are queer for dials and meters? Geis, the sin here is not the plot, though God knows the plot is so thin it could be used as glass. The sin is in the writing. Thomas W. Barker, at the present stage of his development as a writer, is hopeless. Let me quote you a few quotes. Typical quotes.

> 'The sudden shrill and nervous voice made him wince noticeably. A glance around to see the back of her chair and he frowned darkly at it. The voice he used in retort was simply inquiring.'
>
> 'The last sentence was screamed in frustration and panic. Reluctantly complying by switching the scan to show the propulsion system boards on the overhead monitor screen, he grimaced at the expected chorus of yelps and expletives. The resultant outburst was virtually instantaneous.'
>
> 'Well, goddammit, I have...so get your ass out of here and quit ordering me around. You don't know what the hell you're talking about!" he ordered in an irate yell.'
>
> 'Suddenly, a blast of frigid air, changing to blistering heat and back again, served notice that something was either

damaged or not being attended.'

'Just as their tormenter was closing in for the kill, Lon hit full right-side thrust to go directly away from the approaching craft. Glancing up at the monitor screen to find out whether retreat would be effective, he blinked and looked again in startled disbelief. A smile cracked the grim expression on his face. A twinkle in his eyes heralded the idea that immediately developed.'

'Suddenly Pinky's excited squeal broke the silence as effectively as a gunshot would have. There was a flushed excitement about her and she was jumping around in her seat.'

"Now, Geis, I put it to you. That kind of junky, amateur writing has no place in professional print. It yelps for editing...editing to within an inch of its life. But of course the editors at Major are overworked and perhaps they had nothing better to publish, considering what they pay, and had to go with FIVE FOR INFINITY as it stood. They should be ashamed of themselves. They've given Mr. Barker an exaggerated idea of his writing ability and the results will probably be more awful novels from his typewriter making the rounds for years to come."

Alter---you call that quick and clean surgery? It was a massacre!

"Glad you like it."

Let me---let me say this to the corpse. Mr. Barker, sir, it would be better for you if you could learn to see the flaws in your style and techniques. Read analytically other fiction writers. Learn to avoid telling the reader how a character spoke after the how is obvious from the dialog. And try to spot unnecessary words and phrases. And be not too hurt by Alter's ravings. He is often brutal, but he loves fine writing, and...Well, it often takes a long, long time to learn to write fiction even passably well.

"Don't try to salvage the man, Geis! Kill! Kill! There are too many would-be writers in the woodwork as it is."

Alter, leave him alone. Let's go on to another book.

"Bleeding heart! All right. What's next? What's that slim little volume you hold in quivering fingers?"

This is called KENNAQUHAIR, and it is a Juvenile, and it is by Ruth Hooker and is illustrated by Albert Michini. Further, it---

"Just a minute, Geis. The phone is ringing."

***

"Aha-ha-ha-ha-ha...."

Alter, what---?

"That, Geis, was none other than Jim Baen, hallowed editor of GALAXY. He wants me to write the next "The Alien Viewpoint" column in GALAXY."

WHAT!? But that--- That means...

"Precisely! The readers of GALAXY have overwhelmingly voted to have me--ME!---Alter-Ego!, take over the column. Ahhh...how I'll make you squirm, Geis, just the way you made me squirm. The shoe is on the other tentacle now. I remember all the insults, the humiliations, the low-blows."

I never thought---

"Now I have a forum all my own! Hundreds of thousands of readers! You can take this little fanzine of yours, Geis, and stuff it up---"

Just a minute now, Alter. You're still in thrall here. You're still the underling in SFR. You still have to do this column for me.

"Well... I suppose I should. As a favor to my readers who follow my opinions in this piddling journal. Yes, yes, I'll deign to continue this low-paying, minor outlet. But I expect King Features to call any day now and offer me a million dollar contract to do a column in 469 newspapers...and then there's foreign rights...maybe I'll have my own TV series...THE BIONIC ALTER-EGO...."

Alter, are you going to finish the review of KENNAQUHAIR?

"Of course, Geis. Now let me..."

To refresh your memory, it is by Ruth Hooker, illustrated by Albert Michini, and is published by Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Av., South, Nashville, TN 37202. According to a letter from Mary Ellen Rist, of their Marketing Communications, the book is aimed at ages 8-12. It is priced at $5.95.

"I remember, I remember! Now, what this book is, is a morality tale, designed to teach young readers some of the rights and wrongs of life, tolerance, cooperation, the work ethic and respect for their elders' wisdom and experience."

Admirable.

"Execrable. I'll grant you the little monsters have got to be civilized, but as science fiction this story isn't much. Six kids in silvery suits and breathing apparatus travel a road after what appears to have been a total breakdown in civilization.

"they take a side road, a path... and climb...and discover a hidden valley which is somehow free from the deadly pollution, and which has fields, a house, a lake... They have been traumatized by their experiences "outside" and can hardly speak. They are adopted by an old man who lives in the house and tends the fields. He is kind and considerate, gives them new names, teaches them farming and ethics and morality...and then must leave the valley for some reason I've forgotten.

"The kids are left to their own resources and backslide into bickering, sloth, se;fishness and etc. Of course they eventually straighten out and will survive very nicely, thank you. Three boys and three girls; a mixture of ages from teens down to five or six."

A worthwhile story, wouldn't you say?

"I'd say it's maybe fodder for the eight-year-olds, but kids older than that will spot it for the preachy do-gooder tract that it is, will sneer, and will read something more action-filled and exciting and honest.

But, Alter---

"Geis, this is the kind of book adults write and publish for their mythical "nice" child. And good little children will read it, obediently. Coals to Newcastle. This is another in an endless supply of proper reading material for the little ones; stuff the kids should read, not what the kids want to read or will read, given their druthers."

This is not what Abingdon and Ruth Hooker want to hear.

"Tough. But don't worry about them. They'll sell the book to librarians and parents who share their views and the book will sit on the shelves, largely unread. The adults will be happy in their illusions and the kids will buy their favorite reading material on the newsstands."

Well... How about this next book. You should---

"That's all for this time, Geis. I've got to write my column for GALAXY."

Your column! *Gnnnergggh!*

"Tough shit, Geis. Go read a book. I'll be busy for a few hours."

****

ALIEN CONCLUSIONS

First, an abject, face-in-the-dust apology to George Warren. I published his "Damn SFWA" letter last issue, and I should not have. In a following letter he had asked me to not print it, and I forgot his instructions when time came to paste-up the issue.

I have since Taken Steps to make sure this sort of thing does not happen again, to anyone. I value the trust people have given me too much to let faulty procedures damage friendships and undermine precious confidentiality.

****

BY THE GODS! Here I have 3,682 letters-of-comment to short-quote, condense and ridicule, dozens of notices, a handful of reviews---and I'm out of room...in a 56 page issue!

My apologies, people. Blame it on Alter. If he hadn't been so long-winded...

Before I forget: MERRY XMAS!! and a HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

BACK ISSUES

THE ALIEN CRITIC
SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

No other numbers are available

ONE DOLLAR PER COPY

EACH ISSUE CONTAINS MANY REVIEWS. EACH ISSUE CONTAINS LETTERS FROM WELL-KNOWN SF & FANTASY WRITERS, EDITORS, PUBLISHERS AND FANS.

THE FOLLOWING LISTINGS ARE OF FEATURED CONTRIBUTIONS

THE ALIEN CRITIC #5 Interview with Fritz Leiber; "The Literary Dreamers" by James Blish; "Irvin Binkin Meets H. P. Lovecraft" by Jack Chalker.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #6 Interview with R. A. Lafferty; "The Trenchant Bludgeon" by Ted White; "Translations From the Editorial" by Marion Z. Bradley.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #7 "The Shape of Science Fiction to Come" by Frederik Pohl; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "Up Against the Wall, Roger Zelazny", an interview.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #8 "Tomorrow's Libido: "Sex and Science Fiction" by Richard Delap; "The Trenchant Bludgeon" by Ted White; "Banquet Speech" by Robert Bloch; "Noise Level" by John Brunner.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #9 "Reading Heinlein Subjectively" by Alexei and Cory Panshin; "Written To a Pulp!" by Sam Merwin, Jr.; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "The Shaver Papers" by Richard S. Shaver.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #10 An Interview With Stanislaw Lem; "A Nest of Strange and Wonderful Birds" by Sam Merwin, Jr.; Robert Bloch's Guest of Honor Speech; The Heinlein Reaction.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #11 An Interview With Avram Davidson; "The Foundation on Sands" by John J. Alderson; "Footnotes to Fan History" by Larry Shaw.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #12 "Smoke and Glass"--a non-fiction fantasy about Harlan Ellison by Richard Delap; "You Can't Say THAT!" by Richard Lupoff; "Confessions of a Wage Slave" by David M. Harris; "Tuckered Out" by Barry Malzberg; "Uffish Thots" by Ted White.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #13 The Elwood Controversy; "Visit To a Pulpy Planet" by Milton F. Stevens; "HARLAN ELLISON--Some Afterthoughts" by Harlan Ellison; "The Gimlet Eye" by Jon Gustafson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #14 An Interview With Philip Jose Farmer; "Dancing On the Titanic" by Charles W. Runyon; "Thoughts on Logan's Run" by William F. Nolan; "The Gimlet Eye" by Jon Gustafson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #15 "Spec Fic and the Perry Rhodan Ghetto" by Donald C. Thompson; An Interview With L. Sprague de Camp by Darrell Schweitzer; "Uffish Thots" by Ted White; "The Gimlet Eye" by Jon Gustafson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #16 An Interview with Jerry Pournelle; "The True and Terrible History of Science Fiction" by Barry Malzberg; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "The Literary Masochist" by Richard Lupoff; "Whatever Happened to Fay Wray?" by Michael G. Coney; "The Gimlet Eye" by Jon Gustafson; "Plugged In" by George Warren.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #17 An Interview with George R. R. Martin; An Interview with Robert Anton Wilson; "Philip K. Dick: A Parallax View" by Terrence M. Green; "Microcosmos" by R. Faraday Nelson; "Angel Fear" by Freff.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #18 An Interview with Lester del Rey; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "A Short One For the Boys in the Back Room" by Barry Malzberg; An Interview with Alan Burt Akers; "The Gimlet Eye" by Jon Gustafson.

BACK ISSUE ORDER FORM
$1.00 each

Dear REG: I enclose $_____
Please send Back Issue(s)
#5 #6 #7 #8 #9 #10 #11
#12 #13 #14 #15 #16 #17
(Circle #s desired)

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW
Subscription Coupon

All you have to do is fill it in with your name and address (or that of someone you wish to destroy), enclose money, and your life (or that of the other victim) will never be the same. One 'fix' of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and you'll be hooked.

How else can you become so pleasurably addicted as inexpensively?

Dear REG: Start my subscription with issue #_____

$4.00 One Year / $7.00 Two Yrs.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

City.....

State.....Zip.....

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW
P.O. Box 11408
Portland, OR 97211